The Commonweal

A Weekly Review of Literature, The Arts and Public Affairs

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THE CONSCIENCE OF THE RICH

THE UNION LEAGUE CLUB of New York, one of the stanchest citadels of what is usually, but perhaps mistakenly, called "stalwart conservatism"—political and economic conservatism are meant—was the scene selected by the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches for the delivery of a highly remarkable address by Secretary of Agriculture Wallace, on the night of December 7. The address was one which the World Alliance had hoped that Secretary Wallace would deliver at its annual convention in November, but which the Secretary could not give at that time because of the pressure of his work. Newspaper headlines are not usually very apt in defining the main ideas of a public address, their tendency being to select what is sensational, but the New York *Times* placed over its report of the Secretary's speech words which came very close to expressing the chief intention, or purpose, which informed it: "New Social Policy Urged on Wealthy." In more evangelical language, it might have been put as "A Call to the Conscience of the Rich." The speaker is a deeply religious man. There were many religious men, of many forms of faith, clergymen, social welfare workers, among his audience. No doubt there were other men among his audience who while not professionally engaged in organized religious activities are, nevertheless, strongly attached to various religious groups, and in their private and personal lives sincerely apply their religious principles in their business or professional undertakings. To them all, Secretary Wallace spoke as one to whom religion was not simply a matter for sectarian or private or personal concern alone, but of such fundamental public importance, so integrated with the structure of society, that Protestant, Catholic and Jew should unite their forces, along the lines drawn by the religious conscience awakened to the

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need not merely for simple almsgiving, or all forms of organized charity, but for social justice.

He pointed out that in the year of the economic crash, 1929, the 36,000 families in the United States receiving the largest income equaled the income received by the 11,000,000 families receiving the least income. "I am not one of those who believe that the general welfare is best served by an absolutely uniform distribution of wealth," said the Secretary, "but I do question whether the 36,000 families at the top of the economic pyramid averaged 300 times as meritorious, or capable, or as intelligent as the average family at the bottom." "In fact," Secretary Wallace went on to say, "it would seem that the economic rules of the game have been loaded to produce differences far greater than would be expected in a reasonable society." Apparently, then, this leader among the administrators of the New Deal rejects the belief in the mechanistic, inevitable nature of the economic rules by reason of which a small minority of the nation are given a tremendous share of the fruits of that nation's entire output of wealth, while a vast proportion of the population are inexorably doomed to hopeless poverty, with a section in between perpetually striving to achieve entrance into the small class at the top, but always in danger of falling into the great class of the absolutely poor. Members of one class or the other may and do change their individual lots, but the three classes themselves remain constant. No: Secretary Wallace rejects this belief in the iron laws of economics, which are such a comfort to those who may deplore the human results of their operations, but think it is impossible to change them.

On the contrary, the Secretary believes that the economic laws, so-called, are really, for the most part, merely "rules of the economic game," and loaded, at that, in favor of the few against the interests of society as a whole. And he places the responsibility for this abuse of power squarely upon the shoulders of that minority of the rich and, therefore, the socially powerful, who are in a position to influence the key decisions of all the great corporations. "Individual wealthy men have done many astounding things in the founding of broad-gaged foundations," he said, "but there has been little united effective action recognizing the principle of noblesse oblige." And now they could, he declared, easily make mistakes more damaging to the order of civilization which they hold dear than the mistakes of the Bourbons of France immediately preceding the French Revolution. "Is their interest in dividends supreme? Are they concerned primarily with formulating rules of the game which give them a competitive advantage? Are most of them engaged in a ruthless struggle for power? If so, the day will come when the pyramid will be inverted and there will be a great shifting of the blocks with accompanying woe and anguish while the new pyramid is being formed."

On the night after Secretary Wallace's speech, Dr. Virgil Jordan, president of the National Industrial Conference Board, addressing a meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, urged that the country throw overboard all the present policies of the national government which interfere with private industry. Surtaxes on individual and corporate income should be sharply reduced; the Stock Exchange should be released from the Security Act; restrictions as to minimum wages, maximum hours of employment, and collective bargaining should be abolished; federal relief should cease, except for federal loans, not gifts, to the states; aliens should be deported at once, and unemployables "should be put to work under a form of military discipline." Dr. Jordan did not specify how unemployables are to be defined. Presumably, there are millions of men who are simply unemployable because there is no work for them to do which in doing will enable others to make profits from their employment. However, the general drift of his argument is clear enough. It is a total repudiation of what Secretary Wallace and the present administration stand for. It calls for the abandonment of a national policy based in large measure upon religious principles common to the awakened conscience of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths.

Secretary Wallace appeals to the religious conscience of that minority of rich and powerful men who control most of the wealth and the bulk of the vast financial, industrial and even social service corporations of the country. He calls upon them to try to agree upon a long-time policy based upon morality and ethics to benefit the country as a whole.

Dr. Jordan is one of the many advisors of that same minority of the real rulers of the nation who are calling upon them to abandon "reform" in the interests of a "recovery" of that same system of selfish self-interest, slightly disguised and more slightly palliated, by alms and organized philanthropy, the stoppage of which five years ago has plunged so many millions into distress, leaving the minority at the top of the tottering pyramid still complacent, except for a few individuals who accept some degree of personal responsibility but who are not yet awakened to a corporate interest in justice.

As Christmas of 1934 ushers in the New Year of 1935, which voice will be heeded? No greater question lies before the nation. The way in which it is answered will determine the future of the United States perhaps for centuries to come. The Catholic Church and the leaders of the other great faiths are standing together on this issue.

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Week by Week

WITNESSING the effects of a drive to recruit the conservative property-holding citizenry for service in the New Deal army, the country had opportunity to judge how much of what has been done in the past two years is of vital importance to the administration. It was intimated, though rather vaguely, that the Blue Eagle of NRA may soon be a fairly dead bird, even if by a kind of metamorphosis he becomes a tame owl kept by such industries as want him around. The relations between capital and industry seem destined to become matters for the concern of national arbitration authorities, either those now set up or others to follow. On the other hand, the administration continued to lay stress on the need for a better distribution of property. After so many years of unemployment and business stagnation, money has receded into the hands of those formerly powerful enough to underwrite the Wilson-Harding-Coolidge inflation of credit. Unless these men are prepared to take the lead in promoting a new expansion of trade and borrowing power, the government will be forced to distribute through the medium of confiscatory taxation to provide work and money. This wholly sound reasoning was offered to so many people on so many occasions that there can be little doubt concerning the fact that the government wished to make a point. And indeed, supposing wealth to be too timid, self-centered or perplexed to meet the challenge, there would be question only of the method to be adopted. In the long run mere public spending, being static, would halt the kinetic energies behind industry. There would then follow a hardly repressible demand for the operation of business itself by government—a demand the perils likely to result from which need hardly be stressed. One concludes that the present effort to effect far-flung cooperation deserves all the support it can get.

The Trend of Events

IT SEEMS to us that the President in the opening address at the conference on crime in Washington conformed to the definition of wisdom as the putting of things in their right order. Rightfully, we hear a great deal at present about social justice. This is a means to an end, and the end is social order, a just and a relatively happy social order. Theoretically Fascism and Communism are motivated by the same laudable motive of achieving such a social order, and if we may judge by practical instances in the world today, differ principally in the names they give to their methods of state absolutism for achieving social order. It is unthinkable that they plan to augment perpetually social disorder. In the midst of the present disorders (which Mr. Merejkowsky pictures so vividly elsewhere in this issue), the United States is clinging precariously to democracy with, we have reason to believe, motives equally as pure as those of the apologists of other systems. The essence of democracy is that Communists and Fascists should be able to live in the same community and exchange ideas, and sometimes invective, without resorting to "purging" each other with the final arguments of bullets. There can be no doubt that the greatest number of Americans live hopefully and also fearfully in the middle land between the extremes we have mentioned. They are hopeful that democracy can achieve a social order, one in which free will is permitted more often than not as an intangible but yet real luxury of the common citizen. These premises being accepted, it seems right that our numerous private and public organizations which are directing energies to the prevention and punishment of crime should assemble to effect some mutual understanding and agreement. The wisdom of the President was in his opening remarks that put crime prevention squarely into its position as an integral part of our struggle for social justice.

In Restraint of Crime

RUSSIA may have more factories than formerly, but she has demonstrably less civilization. Everything which has been written about the czarist government—and a plenty of horrible things have been written—sounds like the records of a workaday police court beside the story of the mass execution ordered on December 5. Sergei Kirov, member of the Politburo, was assassinated by one who, in the opinion of virtually all observers, nursed a personal grudge. Immediately seventy people were hounded down, sixty-six of whom were dragged before special tribunals and sentenced to death without being able to say a word in their own defense. Even the events of June 30 in Germany were less reprehensible. After all, some of the shooting there was caused by nervous excitement induced by a long period of quarreling. What can anyone say of Stalin's latest deed excepting that it is the culmination of an attitude toward authority which endows brutish force with pseudo-religious sanctity? Surely it is not a question of "Russian primitivism" merely, or of oriental savagery. June 30 is proof that similar things can happen in even the most civilized countries, once the premises have been accepted. Only the little band of dictators, surrounded by a guard of detectives and soldiers, is relatively immune from any terror which unscrupulous party government wishes to inflict. The citizenry as a whole lives

The Terror

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in fear and trembling, without even the chance to appeal to the law for the vindication of a fair name. We still have something to cherish in this country. The American republic has no intellectual ancestor who would not gladly have died to keep from his country this ravaging scourge.

IS NEW YORK pagan? Maybe, but we think not nearly so decidedly as some people would have you believe. A number of literati have that idea in their heads—as a kind of convention to which the unconventional can subscribe without a jolt. Witness "Metropolis," a handsome volume of photographs "assembled by Agnes Rogers with running comment by Frederick Lewis Allen." Harper publishes the book and charges $3. Two pages are devoted to religious life in the big city—to the crowds emerging from St. Patrick's, to women singing at a Columbia service, and to Father Divine's flivver parked beside a dusty curb. A good six pages are expended on night life as such, with the emphasis on Harlem. Coney Island gets twice as much space as all the churches. In noting these interesting contrasts, we are not unmindful of the numerous excellent and interesting pictures which the book assembles. It merely seems to us that only a person who knows nothing about it could find the religious activity of New York's millions so uninteresting. One might wager that a volume of photographs might well be based on that activity alone, with very appreciable results in public approval. Or have we really grown so accustomed to the indifference of the smart to everything ecclesiastical that church is something tucked away into a little corner of the consciousness, to be thought of hastily only on Sunday morning?

A Question of Taste

THE PRESENT objectives of the Legion of Decency, after having been discussed by the bishops of the Catholic Church at their annual meeting, began to emerge clearly as various pastoral letters commented on the problem. Cardinal Hayes, asserting that the movement was demonstrably American and had drawn unqualified support from large groups outside the Church, declared that a "permanent council" was being formed, and that the faithful would be invited to take a solemn public pledge to avoid "indecent and immoral pictures." Other dioceses followed a similar course. In New York, the so-called "Chicago list" of pictures either approved or disapproved is to be published weekly and displayed in the vestibules of churches. Thus machinery has been provided to keep in touch with the output and to render precarious investment in salaciousness. It will be very surprising if the result is not a fairly long continued clean-up of the screen. The whole world will benefit, since one of the reasons why opposition to "Americanization" flourished in many countries was undoubtedly a sense of disgusted antipathy to the creations of Hollywood.

Continuing the Legion of Decency

POSSIBLY distance lends a delusive color to the doings of protesters across the water. But it has ever seemed to us that in the matter of mere showmanship and dramatic brio they display special inventiveness and spirit. This comment, be it understood, insinuates no inferiority in courage or purpose among our own. It is only that their methods seem more routine, or more rational, and hence, on the whole, less entertaining. Perhaps the democratic citizen cannot contest on principle any way but seriously. Our marching men—Coxey's Army, or the more recent bonus army—are splendid or tragic or perhaps even futile, according to the point of view, but in any case they do not prompt laughter. The crippled French veterans, now protesting against pension cuts, have been much less dignified; but a sort of cardinal tomfoolery in their approach makes it unforgettable. To sit reading newspapers, as they have done, in the main thoroughfares of Paris, while the blocked traffic hooted helplessly around them, or to mass their most disabled men for an attack on the police with crutches and canes, shows a talent for the spectacular, an ability to enjoy making a nuisance of oneself, that is notable.

Styles in Protest

ANOTHER decisive battle has just been announced in the war on infantile paralysis. New York's veteran director of Public Health medical laboratories, Dr. William Hallock Park, long distinguished among those experimenters whose skill and tenacity have steadily advanced knowledge of the nature and operation of this fatal virus, has perfected an apparently successful immunization—the second, incidentally, to be announced within a few months. Additional interest is lent Dr. Park's discovery by the circumstances in which the tests of his vaccine were made. When, after some years of work, the moment came for making the trial with human subjects, Dr. Park and his assistant submitted themselves to inoculation—no mean test of courage, in view of the tragic results which have attended one or two other pioneer attempts at this form of immunization from infantile paralysis. The trial was, happily, completely successful, and thereupon several children were given inoculations, and later tested and found immune. It is said that the practise cannot be widely extended at present, but even so a major triumph has been made by a fine scientist.

Medical Triumph

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CHRISTMAS AND THE MARTYRS

By G. K. CHESTERTON

THOSE ignorant of the mystery, in which so many meanings are interlaced like a monogram, might well say that the blood-red sunset of Fisher and More is a subject rather for Good Friday than for Christmas. Then or afterward, the march of the English martyrs was associated with a tramp to Tyburn Tree, a very long day's march from the Christmas Tree. And yet both were parts of one pattern of progress, and correspond to one life stretching from Bethlehem to Calvary. Moreover, Christmas was not really remote from the martyrs, even in its richer or more festive aspect. There was more of such merriment in such men than might seem possible to the strength of man; and a legend lingered even among his enemies that Sir Thomas More had died laughing. So, later, it cannot have been very easy to be gay and cheery after a chat with Topcliffe. Yet Campion and his comrades received their frightful death-sentence with a burst of jubilant psalms, which sounds even in print as abrupt and unexpected as the first shock of Christmas bells. And Southwell, who saw the Burning Babe like a fire in midair at midnight, ended his description with a line as simple as an old carol: "And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas Day."

But the converse is equally important, and perhaps less fully understood. The death of the two martyrs, and especially the death of More, was tragic in many different ways, as well as triumphant in the only essential way. Among other things, it was the tragedy of the Renaissance. In that tragedy, the wrong half of the Renaissance killed the right half of it. The consequences of the crime remain like a curse, in all the complexities of our civilization to this day. For the first thing to note is that the restless Renaissance man did not know what harm he was doing to much that he himself valued. He had no notion of what would be the ultimate effect on anything; for instance, what would be the ultimate effect on Christmas.

It must be admitted that Henry VIII, who murdered More and Fisher, was originally as merry a murderer as we can reasonably expect any murderer on a large scale to be; and whatever else he wanted to murder, he certainly did not want to murder Merry England. He would certainly have been stupendously surprised and puzzled to be told that he was likely to murder Merry England, by wantoning with the wanton Anne Boleyn or starting a diplomatic breach with the distant Italian Papacy. And yet, that was exactly what he was doing, in the long run; and a valuable lesson against starting even small breaches with that distant Italian institution.

Henry Tudor and Thomas More had been warm and even intimate friends; and I should not wonder if, to the very last, they had a sort of affection for each other. They must at one time have shared any amount of jesting and gossip about such a subject as Christmas, which would have appealed very much to Henry, with his love of festivity expressed in pageantry in the palace, and to More with his special love of fun at the fireside and in the home. If we take these two men in relation to an idea like Christmas, and then trace what actually happened to Christmas as it was handled by the two traditions they left behind, we shall have a pretty correct outline of history as regards the real change of Christendom in the sixteenth century. For the Chancellor committed the feast to the keeping of a Church that was unchanging, that might not be specially emphasizing this or that feast at this or that moment; but all of whose feasts were, in a deeper than the vulgar sense, immovable feasts. But the King committed the feast to the keeping of a State that was already changing; that was very movable indeed; and was already moving in a new and contrary direction, first against the feast, and eventually against the King.

Sir Thomas More was beheaded; but his Church was not beheaded. It was in protest against that decapitation that the two martyrs were decapitated; and they were almost the only two who saw, at that stage, that decapitation would be the death of the whole body of Christendom; down to every detail like the observance of Christmas. What was beheaded, in every sense, was the new church of which Henry wanted to be the head; and that very thing did eventually happen, not allegorically but actually, to his successor who was the head. For Henry Tudor only lost his head in fantasy, hardly a hundred years before Charles Stuart lost his head in fact. And the men who killed the King actually were fanatics, whose most violent and unpopular veto really was a veto on keeping Christmas. The Puritans tried their hardest to tear up every trace of Christmas, forbidding it even in family life; and it would be hard to say whether they hated most its supernatural sacrament or its natural enjoyment. The topsy-turvy reversal in that hundred years is an exact model of what really happens when men transfer their loyalty from a changeless to a changing religion.

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It were painful to dwell on the feelings of Henry VIII, if anybody had told him that people were going to kill the King; but he would have been almost as much amazed and horrified, to do him justice, if anybody had told him that they were going to abolish the feast of Christmas. But men whose only reason, for good or bad action, is in their own self-will, have no way of controlling another will that is exercised by another self. The ultimate difference is that Henry wanted Henry to be head of the Church; but Fisher did not want Fisher to be head of the Church. Fisher stood for a principle; and as long as that principle stands, it will stand for all its products and consequences, including the old Christian idea of a feast. But a man who simply starts a personal policy somewhere, starts something that may end anywhere.

This truth is only reemphasized by the fact that the Protestant or anti-Catholic tradition has since then turned head over heels yet another time; and stands now not for Puritanism but for paganism. Cromwell would have stared at a Modernist minister doubting the Divinity of Christ, exactly as Henry VIII would have stared at a Calvinist minister denying the sanctity of Christmas. And anyone now supporting the Modernist minister is in the same position; he does not know what he is supporting, for after another century he would not know it again. Meanwhile, the heroism of Fisher and the humanism of More are permanent possessions of the world, because they are possessions of its only permanent institution. They are what is perhaps only true of the dead and the beatified, and especially the martyred: they are safe.

CATHOLIC GREEN PASTURES

By JOHN T. GILLARD

FORMING one-tenth of the nation's population, and as such constituting an integral part of our national life, of necessity the Negro is affected by the interplay of those forces which affect the population as a whole. If he has shared in the advantages of our material progress—and statistics indicate that he has had his share—by the same token he has shared in our spiritual poverty, social maladjustments, and cultural short-sightedness. Many a Negro race leader has forgotten, or chooses to ignore the fact, that it was only a sublime faith in God which has led the race so far as it has done. Like children impatient of the hand which taught them to walk, they would now run through the lanes of life unaided by religion. Of course this tendency is not at all peculiar to the Negro: it is merely a symptom of the materialism with which many are infected while at secular institutions of learning.

It is no mere piece of flattery to say that never in the history of the world has any race gone so far in so short a time as has the Negro race in this country since the Emancipation Proclamation. But what a disastrous struggle this would be if in the winning it meant that the Negro would lose faith in God. During those dark days when souls prayed to God in the doleful tones of the spirituals, the Negro's hands may have been bound, but his soul was free to soar to the highest heaven. It would be ironical were the freeing of the hands to be followed by a slavery of the soul. Yet this is the danger which today confronts the Negro.

White America refuses to recognize the simple fact that many of the younger generations of Negroes are college bred. Most of us still fondly delude ourselves with the conception of the American Negro which Marc Connelly has given to us in "The Green Pastures." Perhaps no play of recent years set so many people to thinking as did "The Green Pastures." Undoubtedly the histrionic ability and musical genius of the Negro gained added prestige from the perfect performance of Richard Harrison as the Lord, and the splendor of Daniel Haynes as Adam and Hezdrel, and the grand humor of Tutt Whitney as Noah, and the magnificent singing of the heavenly choir.

But as an interpretation of the Negro's spiritual mentality the whole thing was a pathetic travesty. The personal piety of the players and the edifying reverence which each member of the caste displayed undoubtedly invested the drama with an air of spirituality and a power of inspiration which were not at all inherent in the theme itself. Quite apart from the question of the reverence or lack of reverence with which the Lord was characterized—and that point barred the play from the English stage—the fact of the matter is that the spiritual aspirations of the race and the soul depths of the humblest Negro were outrageously maligned. I have discussed the play with many priests laboring on the colored missions in the South and none ever came into contact with any class or group of Negroes who had such gross misconceptions of God and such mundane ideas of the happiness of heaven as were portrayed in "The Green Pastures." The suspicion will not down that much of the play's popularity was not attributable to sublime interpretation by Negro actors or to magnificent singing by a Negro chorus, but rather to the fact that it depicted the

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Negro in a state of spiritual and intellectual undevelopment in which the white audience was convinced the Negro belongs and ought to be kept.

That the Catholic Church has no such stultifying concept of the spiritual treasures of the race is perhaps one of the most encouraging signs that the green pastures of the Negro will not be withered and burnt by the scorching winds of neglect. Occasional events show beyond a doubt that the efforts of the Church in behalf of the 12,000,000 wandering sheep are being blessed with marked success. Recently, for instance, over 2,000 colored Catholics from New York, Newark, Jersey City, Atlantic City, Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore made two pilgrimages to the Shrine of the True Cross in the Chapel of St. Michel, at Torresdale, Pennsylvania. Torresdale is the beautiful estate of that outstanding benefactor of the American Negro, Mrs. Louise Morrell, widow of General Edward Morrell. The pilgrimages were under the auspices of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by Mother Katharine Drexel, sister of Mrs. Morrell.

The estate of St. Michel was originally the family seat of the Francis A. Drexels, family of the Philadelphia banker. Time and death eventually extinguished the glow in the fireplaces of the old mansion. Katharine, one of the three daughters, was making her novitiate with the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh; the two others married. Came Mother Katharine back to the lonely solitude of the empty house and filled it with the chanting of the young women who joined with her in the founding of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. Those sacred walls which witnessed such holy happenings are still standing—a shrine to which American Negroes will ever wend their way grateful to the Drexels and Morrells for help in their progress.

The mere fact that in these trying times so many Negro pilgrims could be gathered together in that holy place for so holy a purpose is significant of the sacrifice which our colored Catholics are willing to make to demonstrate their faith in the efficacy of prayer and to prove their devotion to the Cross of Christ. That a deep spirituality animated those sun-tanned children of the Faith was quite evident from the several hundred who, fasting from early morning hours until their late arrival at the shrine, received Holy Communion. When it is recalled that for some this meant a fast until after eleven o'clock, and that for others it meant a five-hour bus ride from Baltimore, it is apparent that to them the pilgrimage meant penance and sacrifice, not fish-fries and fritters.

High Mass was sung in the beautiful new Chapel of St. Michel, a gift of Mrs. Morrell and designed after the Romanesque churches of Italy. In the afternoon the pilgrims slaked their thirst for the fountains of living water by visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the relic of the True Cross. No greater reverence, no more profound adoration, no more fervent petition, no more gracious thanks were ever offered upon the hallowed ground of St. Michel. While within the chapel an endless stream of souls sought out their "changless Friend" Who troubles naught about the color of their skin, outside the organizer of the pilgrimages, Mother Francis Xavier, with wrinkled age and yearning youth seated at her feet, told wondrous tales of God and stories of the Negro and Indian missions.

Climaxing the full program of a busy day was the procession of the Most Blessed Sacrament. All—and there were many non-Catholics who had been brought by missionary friends—triumphantly walked through the green pastures of Torresdale with their Shepherd. Robert Edmond Jones, who designed the sets and lighting effects for the stage production of "The Green Pastures," could not have duplicated Nature's set and lighting effects: canopied by the blue of the clear heavens, vaulted by the majestic boughs of the arched trees, carpeted with the restful green of the sward, and emblazoned with the golden sunlight. Angels must have stopped in their flight and saints must have stooped from heaven to listen to the swell and fall of an impassioned faith bursting forth, not in the pathetic wail of a Negro spiritual, but in the superb grandeur of the "Pange Lingua."

Considerable as is the distance between "The Green Pastures" of Broadway and the green pastures of Torresdale, it was no greater than the distance between that group which walked the boards of make-believe and that group which crowded to the altar rail to be blessed with the relic of the True Cross. Old folk with failing eyesight, children with twisted arms, young folk filled with high hopes and middle-aged folk bent with cares—all came and knelt in fervent prayer.

The Catholic Church might well take pride in those of her children who trudged so far and at such sacrifice publicly to show their faith. Particularly may the priests and the Sisters who have dedicated their lives to the Negro be proud of their spiritual children. Characteristically epitomizing the pilgrimage, one tired pilgrim as he wended his way to the railroad station said: "Father, my feet are heavy, but my spirit sure is lifted up." And so long as Catholic green pastures in Torresdale continue to witness such gatherings of Negroes so long will the Negro's spirituality bear fruit a hundred-fold. But what of the others?

The world is beginning to realize that knowledge does not necessarily bring virtue, that training of the intellect is not necessarily training of the will. It is beginning to see that education without God is the surest way to life without morals. When the shackles of servitude were

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first stricken from the hands of the Negro's forefathers it was recognized that education would be one of the principal means of uplifting the race. The struggle has been a hard one, but the Negro may now profit by the sad lesson of the materialistic white man. Catholic institutions of learning must open their portals to the clamoring youth of every race. The Negro is getting an education: the discussion is no longer on the advisability or inadvisability of that. The question now is: what kind of education is he getting? The precepts of Canon Law and the injunctions of the papal encyclicals on the imperative need of Catholic education were written with all nations and all races in mind. Can we Americans logically exempt Negro parents even as we hurl anathemas at white parents who do not obey the law and send their children to our Catholic schools? Christ has sown wheat in the pastures of the Negro; we Americans have sown cockle. What will be Christ's attitude on the day of reckoning—"an enemy hath done this"?

Christmas Day

The dinner lies in ruins on the table,
The children play at riots on the floor,
And we, being old and stiff and quite unable
To crawl among the toy trains any more,
Sit back and smile approvingly about
On all the merry clamor of the rout.

Young Jackie, with a four-year-old's abandon,
Goes galloping about in whooping glee
And leaves us not an unscathed foot to stand on,
With rushing his toy football joyously
Through any room in which he sees concealed
A subtle likeness to a football field.

His seniors, hatching loud catastrophes
Upon a spreading net of railroad tracks,
Have threatened him with dire indignities
If any of his gay athletic acts
Should touch the Trans-Library Line and check
The perfect operation of their wreck.

A gabbling trio in the corner fights
Across a game the maker warranted
To furnish many merry days and nights—
Although, up to the present, it has led
To long debates on what each rule decrees,
And sharp unflattering personalities.

Christmas is not a time to think and question;
It is a day one should be glad he lives
And has the priceless gift of a digestion
And large gregarious groups of relatives,
Including active quarrelsome little boys
Who eat and play and make a joyful noise.

But memory, like a Banquo at the feast,
Invisible to others, curses me
With silent scenes of which the very least
Would cast a shadow on the joy I see—
The charity that garbled yesterday
A clumsy Christmas in its own dull way.

An empty store was borrowed for the while
And youngsters clutching tickets in their hands
Crowded outside until their turn to file
Into the place in grave self-conscious bands
To get their dole of skimpy candy bags
And scarred repainted toys with numbered tags.

The day was cold; I know because I stood
Outside for half an hour or so and bore
A youngster on my shoulders so he could
Keep head above the packing crowd, before
The others saw and let me in to aid
The handling of the ragged slow parade.

Within there was a ghastly masquerade
Of cheer; a skinny Santa stood alone,
Uneasy in the empty part he played,
And chattered swiftly in a cheery tone
That tried to spread an air of jollity
About the bald, lop-sided Christmas tree.

The numbered toys that he distributed
(Statistical Saint Nick!) were like the tree,
Cast-offs and battered leavings harvested
From half the town to serve sweet charity;
And errors happened so that half-grown boys
Received unwanted gifts of children's toys
And tiny youngsters lifted quick-hushed wails
Above their gifts of "Baby's Bible Tales."

A few unhappy parents watched the scene,
Gaunt silent people swallowing their pride
To bring their quiet children there to glean
Some scraps of Christmas carelessly supplied
By strangers; they felt twice the woe or joy
Of every ragged girl and grimy boy.

And suddenly the squalid scene was gone
As Jackie gayly tramped across my toes,
And I was Dives by comparison
With crumbs to scatter recklessly to those
Who had no Christmas table richly laid
Nor joy in happy children as they played.

"The poor are always with us," He has said
Who, poor and as a child, came here to earth
On that first meager Christmas.
We are fed
And thus are made content, or moved to mirth,
But these are always with us as a sign
That Lazarus is waiting while we dine.

GERALD RAFTERY.

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THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY

By DIMITRI MEREJKOWSKY

Whether lukewarm Christianity can survive in conflict against militant atheism and paganism, is a vital question of the times which Mr. Merejkowsky here strips to its essentials. Clearly he demonstrates that such Christianity and its cultural survivals, survivals which in many cases have lost all connection with their source and become mere empty forms, are bound to perish miserably. This is for Christendom virtually "the end of the world," he believes, unless Christians can justify their name.—The Editors.

THE INTIMATE union between European civilization and Christianity is a historical fact evident even to those men of our times who have no Christian faith and who haven't the least anxiety in the world over the future of Christianity. This attachment they perhaps affirm unconsciously in their apprehension, growing more and more lucid, of the possible proximity of the last days of European civilization, once upon a time Christian. And even if this end were no more, as yet, than the end of one of the great cycles of history, perhaps no one during the two thousand years of Christianity has visualized as clearly as we that last horizon which Christian tradition calls "the end of the world"—mythical as it may seem to those for whom Christ Himself is only a "myth." But are not Christianity's most relentless enemies apparently nearer to this Christian perception than those believers who are too placid and prosperous?

The explosive force of all revolutions—and we seem to have well realized that we have entered into a revolutionary "zone" from which we will not soon emerge—this explosive force is nothing more than the occult apprehension of the end, a perverted eschatology which nevertheless is in its ultimate roots now and forever Christian.

One of the rationalist critics of the Gospel, speaking of the end of the world and obliged to make use of the Marxist term *Zusammenbruch*—the collapse of everything—was as far from suspecting that he spoke the language of class conflict, as Marx in using the same term was from thinking that he spoke the language of Christian eschatology: do not both of them resemble that character of Molière's who was unaware that he spoke "in prose"? But the leaders of the innumerable human multitudes in the midst of the class conflict—leaders of terrible apocalyptical clouds of locusts—have well said that these multitudes themselves breathe forth already the volcanic sulphurous odor of the end if not of the world at least of European civilization. And it is perhaps always in the menacing red effulgence of social conflagration that the white dawn of the Divine Revolution is reflected, for the most mysterious and the least-known name of Christ is "the Rebel," the Liberator. Were not His disciples once called—and perhaps again will be called—rebels, men who shall overthrow the world?

It is in such dark days when signs appear of evil-threatening revolution accompanied by all the crises—national, political, social, economic and, above all, that crisis of the spirit which is the source of all the rest—it is in these days that arises, with a tragic force unequaled in the two thousand years of European civilization, the question of the future of Christianity.

The critical moment of a sick man is when recovery should set in; then is decided the question: will he live or not? This moment seems to have come for Europe. There has been no crisis so grave since the barbarian invasions; perhaps the present crisis is even more grave because the first invasions were only external, whereas the present one threatens to be at the same time both from within and without.

In order to make a diagnosis of a sickness, it is of course necessary to look at the sick person and to estimate what the illness has done to him. But can Europe be said to be one person? Is it not many contradictory ones?

Perhaps we can find no two persons who in themselves are more synthetic of all European civilization than Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe. In fact, in spite of all their external dissemblances, in spite of the abysses of space and time which separate them, these two spirits resemble each other precisely in their synthesis and conciliation of all the contradictory aspects of that civilization, like twin brothers; behind both of them there is only one face, that of Europe.

"Do you believe in God?" Marguerite asks Faust. And he makes this ambiguous response: "Who would dare say, 'I believe' or 'I do not believe'? Call Him what you like. . . . I have no name for Him. The name is only an empty sound."

And the name of Christ, is that only an empty sound?

"There's no Christianity in you," Marguerite decides about Faust. Could she not have said the same of Goethe? And can we not conclude the same of Da Vinci?

In my book on Leonardo, his disciple, G. Bel-

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traffio, is quoted relating that during a fever the double of his master appeared to him:

> He said to me that everything in the universe is only mechanical, that that which men call "God" is only the eternal Force, indifferent to good or bad, to love or to hate, to life or death, because it is like mathematics, where two and two cannot make five. . . . He said that Christ had come in vain, that He had not conquered death, that He had crumbled into dust in the sepulcher. And when he said that, I began to cry. And he had pity on me and wanted to console me. "Don't cry," he said, "my poor child, there is no Christ, but there is love, great love, son of great wisdom. Heretofore love sprang from feebleness, from miracles, from ignorance, and now it is born of strength, of truth, of knowledge, for the serpent did not lie: 'Taste of the fruit of the tree of science and you will be like God.' "

The following words of Mephistopheles, Faust's double, and perhaps of Goethe himself, could they not be added to the words of the double of Leonardo?

> Come, believe in my grandmother, the Viper's, saying,
> And you'll tremble, some day, at your god-likeness.

Indeed does it not appear that for both of them, Goethe and Da Vinci, the substance of the universe is neither good nor bad, neither God nor devil, neither light nor shade, but something neuter, intermediate, resembling that "clear obscurity," that chiaroscuro, which Leonardo so loved, by which he was seduced and seduced others?

The scriptural insistence that men of divided minds cannot be firm in their ways expresses better than any other the destiny of those angels or demons of European culture, Da Vinci and Goethe. Dante also has for them a description of tremendous profundity:

> Angels who were neither rebellious
> Nor faithful to God, but were for themselves.

There must have been at the time Satan rebelled against God, angels who wished neither to join the army of God nor the army of Satan, who stayed *hors du combat*, who looked on the struggle with indifference. Liberal and sad spirits, neither good nor bad, neither light nor dark, participants in evil as in good, dwellers in shadow as well as in the light, they were driven by Divine Justice toward the valley of the earth, midway from heaven and from hell, toward the valley of the half-light where they were like the chiaroscuro so loved of Leonardo.

It seems indeed that the two titans of European culture, Da Vinci and Goethe, are angels of the half-light who have not made their choice between God and Satan. But, are we not all as they are? "I know thy works, for thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth" (Apocalypse, iii, 15-16).

The punishment of all those who look on without taking sides is insatiable thirst, impotence, the inextinguishable interior fire. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke, xvi, 24).

In order to understand this cry, it might aid us to compare Leonardo with Christopher Columbus: one had little science, but great faith, and he discovered a new world; the other had much science, but little faith, and, measured by what he could have done, accomplished practically nothing. It was a torment of impotence that was the plaint of the whole life of Leonardo and to it he was entirely given over as he approached death.

His dream, "We shall fly, we shall be like gods," has not been realized, neither for him nor for us. The man in the flying machine is still the slave of gravity, of mechanism, of death; he is still the worm straining upward from the dust. The new Icarus is still destined to the same miserable end as the Icarus of antiquity. Exterior wings, without interior wings, are but chains. Goethe-Faust, who also dreamed of wings, well understood this:

> It is not easy, alas, to unite
> The wings of the spirit to the wings of the body.

Could we not say as much for all our European culture? All exterior, is it not like a body without a soul, a cadaver?

"And seeing a certain fig tree by the wayside, he came to it and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it: May no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And immediately the fig tree withered away" (Matthew, xxi, 19). May the same not be said of all our Christian civilization! Only leaves, only holy words, pious thoughts, but not a single fruit, not a single saintly action!

Here then is the first and the last question on the future of Christianity posed by the crisis of the spirit in European civilization: Who is our true unknown guide, the prophet of Christian Europe? Is it Dante?

To demand that men of the twentieth century return to the "Summa" of Saint Thomas Aquinas, to the philosophical ossuary of the "Divine Comedy," would be as absurd as offering a child's garments to a man for his clothing. We can no longer think like Dante, but we can always will what he willed; we can will that "the stone which was rejected by you the builders" shall become "the head of the corner" and that the world know that there is no salvation except in Jesus of Nazareth, "For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."

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Da Vinci and Goethe did not know, or did not wish to know, His name. Dante knew it, and we can learn from him. We can, but we do not wish to. We have forgotten the name of Christ. Who, in fact, recollects what is meant by "Jesus is the Christ—King. Christianity is the Kingdom of Christ"?

In the Church the name of Christ is easily pronounced, but it is said without the world hearing and seeking salvation. More and more the Church separates itself from the world, and the world from the Church. Here, in the world, it is very difficult, almost impossible, to pronounce the name of Christ, for the children of this world, sons of the high European culture, like their guides, Da Vinci and Goethe, refuse to recognize the name or, what is worse, they remain indifferent. They are "neither cold nor hot" but "lukewarm" like those whom Our Lord has promised to "vomit" from His mouth. And it is in vain that at the edge of the precipice we extend our hands toward our two blind guides, our two Titans in chains, Da Vinci and Goethe; they cannot save us. There are not many saviours, there is only one Saviour, He who has said to all men, and perhaps to us more than to all others in two thousand years of Christianity: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John, xv, 5).

The bitterest fruit of the indescribable Russian horror is a slavery which neither modern Europeans nor ancient Egyptians of the time of the pyramids could conceive. Men of free Europe—yes, despite all the horrors, real or imagined, of capitalism, of militarism, of Fascism—men of free Europe, if you do not wish to become slaves, remember Him, He Who has said and says still to all slaves and to us: "And you shall know the truth: and the truth shall make you free. . . . If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John, viii, 31, 36).

Oh, if we could well understand the sermon on the end of the world, preached on Mount Olivet, perhaps we would be saved. "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee: thirsty and gave thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came to thee? . . . Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew, xxv, 37-40).

And where can the men of today best learn what that means? In the churches? No, in the hot-beds of revolution, in the penitentiaries, in the prisons, the hospitals, the brothels—everywhere where man is crushed by the heaviest yoke of the social order. The picture of the Last Judgment, so naive that it would seem to have been drawn for barbarians and savages, becomes suddenly, if it is understood, the most colossal and the most real picture of universal history.

"Now is the judgment of the world" (John, xii, 31). Yes, it is now, today even, in the eternal Coming, the eternal Presence of the Saviour, it is today even that is decided in the last judgment of universal history the question which comes nearest to us, the question of today and tomorrow—the question which we call "the social problem." Those who are satiated, rich and idle, will recognize in each one of those who labor, who are poor, who are hungry, the Son of Man, his Brother.

Is it possible to be more concerned with the social problem, to incarnate it more than He, to say to men more clearly than He did: "Shall your equality be attained in slavery, in hatred, in death, or in liberty, in love, in life everlasting—I am the Way."

Today, as always, the gaze of Jesus is fixed on man.

Song for the Stable

I sometimes think the eyes of sheep,
The gentle onyx gaze,
The innocence a fathom deep,
And all their docile ways,

The Lord bestowed on them somehow
The night His Son was born. . . .
I sometimes think the placid cow,
Mild creature of the horn,

Put on her patience half sublime
Beneath the natal star,
The horse was bridled for all time
With beauty singular— —

The speaking look that may not speak,
The eloquence gone mute,
The holy wonder of the meek,
The angel in the brute!

I would address the lamb, the small
Apostle of the fold:
"Oh, was His first cry scriptural
That rang across the cold?"

"Or did the new Babe drowse and dream,
His mother's breast His sphere?
High-roosting on your dusky beam,
What saw you, Chanticleer?"

"What saw you, kind and clumsy mule?
What heard you, ox and ass,
Upon that first and distant Yule
When wonder came to pass?"

"What vision far beyond your ken,
Remembered, marks you so?
I ask you, Sirs, what thought you then—
A thousand years ago?"

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL.

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WE ARE ALL CENSORS

By T. O'R. BOYLE

AMONG the publications which have scored the Legion of Decency or the idea behind it, there are three which are especially interesting by reason of their choice of argument, the liberal *Nation,* the Astor-Moley review *Today,* and the widespread *Liberty*. A consideration of these articles will repay the effort, not so much by providing us with a refutation of the arguments involved, as by showing that the motives and objectives of the Legion are, seemingly, misunderstood. Of course, I cannot speak officially for the Legion of Decency but, having had some part in organizing it in our locality, I believe I have an insight into its purposes and principles. Certainly in these ticklish questions of public morals it is well for us to be clear in our own minds as to what we want and how we are to get it. In no other matter is it easier to go astray, as we see in the old theological axiom that heresies in matters of conduct, as opposed to those of doctrine, are never wholly extirpated. The principle that indecent and immoral pictures should not be exhibited is a simple and incontestible one, but the acceptance of this principle is entirely different from its application.

Let us take first the article by James Rorty in the *Nation*. He begins with what, at first sight, seems to be a bright sally: The 12,000,000 Legionnaires of Decency—8,000,000 of them Catholics—who by autumn will comprise the membership are, by their own admission, untainted; the movies have failed to corrupt them. "Otherwise the crusade would be un-Christian and immoral. Surely one does not mobilize sinners to do God's work." Hence, he concludes, the movies are to be acquitted of the charge of corrupting the morals of Americans. Less subtle is the sentence from the concluding paragraph of the article which "points up" the above argument rather brutally. There he refers to the members of the Legion as "this herd of pharisaical censors."

There is nothing more calculated to make a liberal paw the ground and roar than to wave a blue law in his face. Mr. Rorty takes the stand that the object of the Legion—if not declared, yet inevitable—is a federal censorship presaged by the present white and black lists. It is another attempt on the part of one section of the populace to inflict their ideas of morality on another section. This is a basic point that it will be well to dwell on. Now, her enemies have admitted that the Catholic Church has gained a reputation for sanity in her opposition to blue laws as such. It is hardly necessary to give instances, but Sunday observance and prohibition spring immediately to mind. The point is, when is a law a blue law? The statutes against murder, theft and slander are hardly to be classed as such. Is the present crusade against the movies an unwarranted interference with the activities and morals of others? In other words, are the movies really bad? The author of the *Nation* article says they are not bad but stupid. He is no admirer of Hollywood's offerings in the main, but his objection is not to their salaciousness but to their empty stupidity, their lack of genuine social and artistic content. He contends that the success of the present crusade is owing to the fact that our Puritan mass culture has become bored with motion pictures because its innate prurience has been only slightly stirred up by the current products of the movie factories. Of honest sin they have given us practically nothing. "Mae West's version of sex was far more decent than anything the screen had shown for years."

The *Nation* writer and the Legion member therefore disagree on the question whether the movies are harmful to those that view and hear them. How can this question be settled? For adults there is but one means of finding the answer and that is by an appeal to the individual conscience. Conscience means our consciousness in the light of accepted principles of the moral rightness or wrongness of our experiences. Now it is hardly debatable that if we put the question to the majority of American or Canadian people whether many of the movies they attend are morally evil—in the sense of their furnishing experiences that tend to evil rather than to good—the answer will be an emphatic affirmative. An editorial in *Collier's* sums up the answer to this query rather neatly in the following words:

> The valid charge made by the religious leaders and other critics is that too many motion pictures portray base standards of taste and morality. Sex is crudely interpreted. Romantic love is made cheap and tawdry. . . . Acts which religion defines as sins are made glamorous and attractive. . . . In the long run nothing is more highly regarded than our common ideals of good conduct. Any man or group which treats these ideals with contempt is headed for trouble.

It may be objected that the principles from which the majority judge are wrong, that they derive from "our Puritan mass culture." The use of the epithet here begs the question. Our principles derive from reason and race experience which tell us that certain things, such as sex irregu-

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larity, are harmful to the individual and to society. Any experience which would induce us to violate these principles is wrong, is "an occasion of sin." True, experiences that are harmful to some may not be so to others, but in matters of impurity most people resemble one another very closely.

We turn now to the article in *Today*. It is titled "Censoring the Movies," and retails the opinions of Judge John R. Davies, who is president of the executive committee of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. From our point of view this article is of particular advantage because it treats the question of the effect of the movies on children.

Judge Davies contends that the producer is guiltless if children see pictures that are unfit for them. The Du Ponts are not to be blamed if the dealer to whom they sell their dynamite resells it to consumers under sixteen years old. The exhibitor, the individual theatre-owner, should decide, or have decided for him by local committees, whether he may admit children to see certain pictures. Judge Davies asks:

> Why should the producer or agency face the loss of a market of 90,000,000 adults because some 30,000,000 or 40,000,000 infants might be contaminated?

In this argument are several statements and implications. (1) Many pictures are harmful to children. (2) Some pictures are harmful to children which are not harmful to adults. (3) It is implied, since no restriction is to be placed on the manufacturer and the distributor, that no pictures can be harmful to the adult person. Later in the article he states that the producer "might have sinned long ago and occasionally."

With the first and second statements there can be no quarrel. They were abundantly proved in the studies of the Motion Picture Research Council, the findings of which are reported by Henry James Forman in his book, "Our Movie Made Children." The third is made so sweeping because of what Judge Davies calls "the constant danger of censorship . . . at the source of manufacture."

Now let us face this bugaboo of censorship. As I see it, the Legion of Decency is not an appeal to state action, but to the individual conscience. There is no official Catholic white list or black list; at least those which are issued from various sources are guides after the manner of summarized reviews, and we are no more obliged in conscience to follow them than we are to accept the judgments indicated by the red, yellow or green lights and the one, two, three, four stars of the secular magazines. However, they should be helpful to one who knows nothing of the picture being shown in the local theatre. Censorship is a dangerous weapon when exercised by a board of humans. The members are susceptible to so many influences that they soon seek refuge behind a set of mechanical rules which ultimately defeat their own purpose. An amusing book has been made describing the rejections of existing Boards of Censors. To my way of thinking, to sidetrack the Legion, and the movement led by the Legion, by turning it into an agitation for a censor would be to foil it completely.

"Are you forgotting the 'Index' of prohibited books? Your Church has a censorship of books and now it wants a censorship of films, and then it will extend its efforts to a censorship of all books printed." The cases are not parallel. In the first place it is not true to say that we have a censorship of books. No censorship, in the meaning given to the word in the present discussion, is worth while unless it is complete, and certainly not every book which a Catholic may read—or write—must have the Roman or diocesan *nihil obstat*. On the "Index" are put books the condemnation of which amounts, with the acompanying reasons for the condemnation which the Canon Law demands, to positive teaching on a point of doctrine. A reading of Titulus XXIII of the Canon Law should be recommended to those who talk glibly of the Catholic "Index Expurgatorius."

There is, however, a censorship of books which is complete: that is the censorship prescribed by the natural law, by one's own common sense; and it is a similar censorship that is the aim of the Legion of Decency for motion pictures. For books it is thus stated in the Church laws: No one can be exempted from the prohibition which the natural law lays down against the reading of books which present a likely spiritually danger. In other words, the natural law, which is but an expression of right reason, a judgment of our conscience, tells us that we may not read a book that is dangerous to our faith or morals. The same law applies to moving pictures. Our censor is our conscience, and this is the censorship which the Legion of Decency demands and is fighting for. The curtailment of the manufacture of immoral films is desirable (and here the action of the Legion is meeting with success), but secondary.

For young people, whose powers of reasoning and discriminating have not yet been developed, this censorship must be applied by someone in authority. Judge Davies's suggestion that it be done by the local theatre-owner or by a local committee is quite a good one for exceptional cases but are not parents the divinely appointed censors in this case? One of the results of the present campaign or crusade will be to awaken parents to their duties in this regard.

Which brings us to the *Liberty* article. The gist of the argument which is therein advanced

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against the Legion is briefly stated. It starts from the principle that it is demand that determines supply. Then it points out the fact, which it evidences by means of instances and figures, that the people patronize pictures that are lascivious much more readily than those which are not. Therefore the producers are not to blame, but the public is, because it is getting what it wants.

True it is that demand determines supply but it is clear that demand can be stimulated and, as the advertisers say, educated. Let us suppose that one of the more startling pictures of today could have been shown in 1914. We can imagine the storm of protest that would have arisen. But it has been a matter of increasing doses. Little by little, step by step, the movies have been outdoing themselves in "getting away with dirt." Certainly, then, the producers cannot be held blameless and, despite the effort to put the blame on popular demand, they richly deserve the spanking that the Legion is so resoundingly administering.

But the underlying fact brought out in the *Liberty* article remains: multitudes do patronize the off-color pictures. This leads to what is clearly the main purpose of the Legion of Decency: it is a public movement to awaken the private and social conscience to a great evil. Little by little we were allowing ourselves to become insensible to a great source of temptation, a dangerous occasion of sin; familiarity was breeding contempt of a danger that never ceases; and our sense of shame, always a strong defense, was being weakened and destroyed.

The Legion of Decency cannot injure the motion picture industry. Rather, by clearing it of elements that are unworthy, it will help it to grow, artistically and educationally, into the great social agency that it potentially is.

What Virgil Thought of the New Deal

'Twas God Himself ordained that men must toil,
To fortune none by easy ways should fare;
That skill should win the harvest from the soil
And mortal minds grow kind by dint of care.

He gave, lest men should rot in idle ease,
To serpents venom, and made wolves to roam,
Locked fire in stone, sent tempests on the seas,
Hid wine in grapes, and honey in the comb.

Little by little, still devising arts,
Men won the mastery for their dauntless race;
And found out fire, bridged rivers, named in charts
The stars whereby to steer through watery space.

Through need, men learnt to hunt, to fish, to sow,
The axe and saw were wielded, darts were hurled;
Through need the arts were learnt in stress of woe—
And thus unwearying labor won the world.

HUGH DE BLACAM.

BOOKS OF THE YEAR

By THE EDITORS

THERE are limits to everyone's reading. Incidentally, to ours! Accordingly the following list of books may lack some titles of importance—may, indeed, name a book or two which would invite in some quarters the ancient gesture of thumbs down. Mr. H. L. Mencken reports (doubtless as proof of a successful career) that after twenty-five years as a reviewer he has discontinued reading current literature. In more ways than one, this statement arouses envy. And yet—well, anyhow, here is our choice.

The nicest novel of the year is "Mary Peters," by Mary Ellen Chase (Macmillan. $2.50); the biggest and in some respects the best is Franz Werfel's "Forty Days of Musa Dagh" (Viking. $3.00). For literary quality we recommend "Lost Paradise," by Robert P. Tristram Coffin (Macmillan. $2.50), L. A. G. Strong's "Corporal Tune" (Knopf. $2.00), "Lightship," by Archie Binns (Reynal and Hitchcock. $2.50), and "The Proud and the Meek," by Jules Romains (Knopf. $2.50)—which is not saying that the third and fourth are germ-proof in every other respect. Those who like life and problems may turn to "Fontamara," by Ignazio Silone (Smith and Haas. $2.50), "The Foundry," by Albert Halper (Viking. $2.50) and "Resurrection," by William Gerhardi (Harcourt, Brace. $2.50). If in quest of a spot far from the madding crowd, consult "Now in November," by Josephine Johnson (Simon and Schuster. $2.00) or "The Folks," by Ruth Suckow. Historical are "So Red the Rose," by Stark Young (Scribner's. $2.50), "The Gallybird," by Sheila Kaye-Smith (Harper. $2.50) and "Salvation," by Sholem Asch (Putnam. $3.00). England comes into its own in Doris Leslie's "Full Flavour" (Macmillan. $2.50) and "This Little World," by Francis Brett Young (Harper. $2.50). The perils of being human are duly set forth in Evelyn Waugh's "Handful of Dust" (Farrar and Rinehart. $2.50) and Manuel Galvez's "Holy Wednesday" (Appleton-Century. $2.00). For the sake of good humor, add "Little Orvie," by Booth Tarkington (Doubleday, Doran. $2.50). By way of sentiment James Hilton's "Good-Bye, Mr. Chips" has reached many (Little, Brown. $1.25). If by this time your brain is completely addled, it may be permissible to take a warning in the shape of Isabel Patterson's "Golden Vanity" (Morrow. $2.50).

Numerous worthies have been embalmed this year. Among the most notable biographies are: Douglas S. Freeman's "R. E. Lee" (two volumes, and two to come; Scribner's. $2.50), A. J. A. Symon's "The Quest for Corvo" (Macmillan. $2.50), and Hilaire Belloc's "Cromwell" (Lippin-

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cott. $4.00). Well worth commending are A. Yarmolinsky's "Dostoievsky" (Harcourt, Brace. $3.75). John Buchan's "Oliver Cromwell" (Houghton Mifflin. $4.50) and Sacheverell Sitwell's "Liszt" (Houghton Mifflin. $4.00). Of great interest to careful students of the American past is George Fort Milton's "Eve of Conflict" (Houghton Mifflin. $5.00). Good hard work has gone into the writing of William Starr Myers's "General George B. McClellan" (Appleton-Century. $5.00). Christopher Hollis has written much, including "Thomas More" (Bruce. $2.25). Self-embalming has whiled away the hours profitably for not a few, as witness: Aladar Kuncz's "Black Monastery" (Harcourt, Brace. $2.75), Stanley Walker's "City Editor" (Stokes. $3.00), Irwin Hoover's "Forty-two Years in the White House" (Houghton Mifflin. $3.50) and Henry W. Nevinson's "In the Dark Backward" (Harcourt, Brace. $2.50). The flavor of a goodly past is conserved in Mrs. Winthrop Chanler's "Roman Spring" (Little, Brown. $3.00). Last but by no means least is that first-rate book, Halliday Sutherland's "A Time to Keep" (Morrow. $3.00).

What is going on around us is not to be despised. Events in rapidly changing America are interpreted from divergent points of view in "New Frontiers," by Henry A. Wallace (Reynal and Hitchcock. $2.00), Schuyler C. Wallace's "New Deal in Action" (Harper. $2.00), "The Challenge to Liberty," by Herbert Hoover (Scribner's. $1.75), "The American Diplomatic Game," by Drew Pearson (Harper. $3.00). Charles A. Beard and G. H. E. Smith are the authors of "The Open Door at Home" (Macmillan. $3.00), a discussion of our foreign policy. The outlook abroad has been discussed extensively. The Soviets come in for several good drubbings by Malcolm Muggeridge ("Winter in Moscow" — an excellent book! — Little, Brown. $2.50), William Henry Chamberlain ("Russia's Iron Age"—a correspondent's frank mementos—Little, Brown. $3.50), and Countess Alexandra Tolstoy ("I Worked for the Soviet"—a would-be sympathizer's valedictory—Yale. $3.00). Concerning Germany, Price Hubertus Loewenstein's "The Tragedy of a Nation" is particularly good (Macmillan. $2.50). The armament racket is the subject of two treatises—"Merchants of Death," by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen (Dodd, Mead. $2.50) and "Iron, Blood and Profits," by George Seldes (Harper. $2.50). More theoretical discussions of politics and economics, not to mention sociology, abound. We would place a star beside these in particular: Charles E. Merriam's "Political Power" (Whittlesey House. $3.00), John T. Flynn's "Security Speculation" (Harcourt, Brace. $3.00), and "Current Economic Policies," a symposium edited by Joseph B. Hubbard (Henry Holt. $2.75). George Soule's "The Coming American Revolution" is now pretty aged but still worth reading (Macmillan. $2.50).

Poetry begins for us this year with the one-volume "Works of William Shakespeare" (Oxford. $3.00), which should enable many to begin reading the bard in the right spirit. Among the books by living poets the following particularly beguiled us: "The Poems of W. H. Auden" (Random House. $2.50), Laura Benét's "Basket for a Fair" (Doubleday, Doran. $1.75), Ezra Pound's "Eleven New Cantos" (Farrar and Rinehart. $1.50), J. Corson Miller's "Cup of the Years" (Humphries. $1.75) and (up to a certain point) Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Wine from These Grapes" (Harper. $2.00). Comment on the poets abounds. John Livingston Lowes's "Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius" merits reading, despite the number of similar books on the market (Houghton Mifflin. $2.50). George Saintsbury's "Shakespeare" is a neat reprint of two articles (Macmillan. $1.00). Margaret Sherwood's "Undercurrents" contains fresh comment on the Romantics (Harvard. $3.50). Arthur L. Wheeler's "Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry" is scholarly in a first-rate way (University of California. $3.00). "The American Theatre," edited by Montrose J. Moses and John Mason Brown, is an anthological history of our Thespians (Norton. $3.75).

Good religious writing always merits emphasis. "Jesus Christ," a three-volume critical biography by Leonce de Grandmaison, is now complete in the English version (Sheed and Ward. $10.00). Other publications include: "The Victory of Christ," by Anscar Vonnier, O. S. B. (Burns, Oates. 5/), "A Primer of Prayer," by Joseph McSorley (Longmans, Green. $1.25), "Stages on the Road," by Sigrid Undset (Knopf. $2.75), "The Mass of the Western Rite," by Fernand Cabrol, O. S. B. (Herder. $1.50), "Mediaeval Religion," by Christopher Dawson (Sheed and Ward. $2.00), "The Burden of Belief," by Ida F. Coudenhove (Sheed and Ward. $1.25), Arnold Lunn's "Now I See" (Sheed and Ward. $1.50), and Ross J. Hoffman's "Restoration" (Sheed and Ward. $1.50).

Of historical interest is Maisie Ward's "The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition," a contribution to English Catholic memories of the Oxford Movement and its aftermath (Sheed and Ward. Volume I, $3.75). American historical writing of a new order and merit is exemplified by Craine Brinton's "Decade of Revolution" (Harper. $2.00). One may profitably note other titles: G. N. Clark's "Later Stuarts," Volume I in the "Oxford History of England" (Oxford. $5.00), Hilaire Belloc's "Shorter History of England" (Macmillan. $3.00), Arnold Toynbee's "Study

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of History" (3 volumes), not always right but exceptionally stimulating, and Charles Harris Whitaker's "From Rameses to Rockefeller," a quite original history of architecture (Random House. $3.50). "The Reformation in England," by G. Constant, was given warm praise (Sheed and Ward. $2.50). Ruth Benedict's "Patterns of Civilization" studies three ancient cultures (Houghton Mifflin. $2.50). Aspects of the English contemporary scene are presented in J. B. Priestley's "English Journey" (Harper. $3.00), and the Europe of today is breezily surveyed in Philip Gibbs's "European Journey" (Doubleday, Doran. $3.00).

Last but of course not least come some books by COMMONWEAL folk. "The Catholic Church in Action," by Michael Williams, aided by the very competent collaboration of Julia Kernan, introduces the reader to the way in which Catholicism performs its manifold tasks (Macmillan. $2.50). George N. Shuster's "Strong Man Rules" (Appleton-Century. $2.00) is an interpretation of Hitler Germany. James J. Walsh's "American Jesuits" is a readable survey of a great theme (Macmillan. $2.50).

A friend we need is a book we heed!

Communications

HOW GOOD IS AMERICAN MUSIC?

Jersey City, N. J.

TO the Editor. I would appreciate the privilege of saying a word of comment on the article, "How Bad Is American Music?" by Henry Bellamann, appearing in the October 26 issue of your periodical. The American composer whose advent is hardly a matter of more than fifty years will scarcely wax irate if he finds himself berated for not having, in that limited time, equaled the achievements of Beethoven. Indeed the sum total of the arguments set forth lose a great deal of their irritant efficiency by reason of their lack of novelty. In the language of the comic opera ditty, "We've heard that stuff before"—to a point *ad nauseam*. May I say that what is objectionable is the tone of the article. Its writer seems to choose to view his subject through the vista of such darkly colored horn-rimmed spectacles as to remind one of the assertion of the convict who asserverated that "the towels in the Sing Sing wash-room were blacker than they were painted." It is indeed scarcely an encouragement and service to American music to view the subject from the standpoint of "how bad" it is, and by way of antithesis I would like to raise the question as to how good is American music.

In justice to Mr. Bellamann, his final short paragraph does briefly refer to this aspect, only to raise the question why our country has not produced composers as good as the poets, Poe, Emerson, Whitman and Hawthorne, or the painter, Albert Ryder. While not exactly admitting the premises on which this question is based, may I say that an answer would seem to suggest itself to the effect that there must be certain conditions pertinent and peculiar to creative musical art in this country which hamper, hinder and frustrate the fruition of our composers. In plain "United States" the cards are stacked against the American composer. Passing this, however, for a time, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and in the words of our good friend Al Smith, "Let's examine the record." With this end in view, may I ask:

Are not the piano sonatas of McDowell at least as good as any written in Europe since the day of Beethoven? (I have in mind comparison with those of Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Grieg.)

Is not the McDowell D Minor piano concerto the equal of the Tschaikovsky B Flat Minor or the Liszt E Flat Major?

Are not the more recent efforts of Morris and Carpenter on a parity with those of Prokofieff or Toch?

Is not the Hadley tone poem, "Salome," a better work than "The Tragedy of Salome," by Florent Schmitt?

In the field of the orchestral-choral are not the Hadley "Belshazzar" and "Myrtil," or more especially the "Hora Novissima" of Parker, quite as respectable as the Elgar "Kingdom," Richard Strauss "Taillefer" or Hoenegger "King David"?

Does not our American woman composer, Mrs. H. H. Beach, with her magnificent and scarcely ever performed "Gaelic Symphony" put to shame the efforts of any European woman composer, especially the much overrated Charminade?

Cannot the Hadley, Hanson, Hill, Waagenaar, Converse, Mason and Chadwick symphonies be mentioned in the same breath as the contemporary foreign output?

In the sphere of light opera, is not Victor Herbert far superior to Lehar and Strauss?

As for Catholic church music, are not the "Missa Festiva" of Montani or the "Missa Pontificalis" of McGrath equivalent to the efforts of Refice or Ravenello?

Are not American musicians composing experimental Catholic church music which does not fear comparison with the output of Andriessen or Schroeder?

How much inferior is the Yon "Sonata Chromatica" for organ or the Delamater organ concerto to similar works of Bossi and Reger?

Are the Taylor, Gruenberg and Hanson operas any worse than the recently exhibited emanations of Krenick, Respighi and Pizzetti?

Lastly, have not American composers writen songs which are not ashamed to look aface those of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms?

The writer might readily ask many more such questions but he hopes he has asked enough to provoke some thought as to what the accomplishments of the American composer really are. And while he is aware that indigenous music lovers may not return an answer to them in all cases favorable to our composers, he hopes he has evoked a train of thought suggestive of the statement that

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the sum total of native effort is far greater and finer in quality than generally supposed to be. Furthermore, he might ask how many music lovers have heard, are actually acquainted with, and really know the works referred to, and are therefore in a position to render a just and truthful verdict.

Reverting to the matter of "stacked cards," may the writer ask why none of the prize-winning compositions in the Victor contest have received a dignified New York performance? Why has not the Schubert prize-winner of Mr. Haubiel been produced? Why has not the Philharmonic made good the promise attributed to its manager to perform Mr. James's prize-winner? Surely, if these compositions were good enough to win prizes, they are good enough to be heard and their non-performance is prima-facie evidence of "stacked cards."

As to Mr. Bellamann's references to Mr. Toscanini, is not the fact that in a decade he has only produced two American orchestral works plus an orchestrated piano piece more evidence of "stacked cards" plus an indictment to the effect that the organization which has permitted him to remain at its head is at least oblivious to the finer aspects of the progress of music in this country, and undeserving of public support?

In conclusion, what is needed is not "baloney" criticism and cynical fulminations against native music for the lack of a Titanic super-genius akin to the four "B's," but rather a more widespread acquaintance, knowledge and appreciation of the surprising amount of splendid music it has actually given the world in the short space of time it has been in existence. All the foregoing is a desideratum which can only be realized through the frequent and repeated performance of native works, a matter of simple and elemental justice scandalously and infamously denied by the foreign potentates and czars who in the main rule the destinies of American music life. To conclude, the question indeed is not, "How bad is American music?" but rather "How good is American music?"

JAMES P. DUNN.

A WORD ABOUT MARITAIN

South Natick, Mass.

TO the Editor: A letter of Professor Louis J. A. Mercier in the December 7 COMMONWEAL continues to hold that I made a mistake in drawing such a distinct line between Jacques Maritain and the late Irving Babbitt. I now draw the line darker and more distinct.

Irving Babbitt was, first and last, interested in the preservation of culture. In order to preserve it he said that he was almost ready to accept the Jesuits. If the Jesuits had not been sufficient, I presume he might have wished to accept God.

Need I point out that Maritain's philosophy is not quite so patronizing?

Irving Babbitt, although he talks so rudely to naturalists, is a naturalist himself. His "higher will" may be the highest point of nature, but it is none the less nature. His "humanism" is nothing more than naturalism in its most respectable form—well dressed, etc.; and the fact that this humanism likes to forget its origin, and that it sneers at its poor relatives, only attests to its snobbery.

Maritain is not obliged to raise himself up, after the Babbitt manner, by treading down the less civilized forms of naturalism. He can afford to be generous to all unguided naturalists. His attention is toward the supernatural, toward God, and when his eyes are in that direction, the naturalists—both the respectable ones like Babbitt, and the others—are all of one flock; there is but an unimportant line between them. Yet between Maritain and all naturalists the line stands out, as I should like to make it, darker and darker.

DANIEL SARGENT.

A WELCOME TO MEXICAN CHILDREN

Texas.

TO the Editor: We Catholics of the United States seem pained and grieved and indignant because of the persecution of the Church in Mexico and the compulsory attendance of the children at socialistic schools. Can we not do something about it? Can we not, at least, help those boys and girls who want to attend a Catholic school?

At a regional meeting of the National Council of Catholic Women held in El Paso recently, a resolution was adopted denouncing the action of the Mexican government. Perhaps these good women or their representatives could arrange for the Mexican boys and girls to come to our land of the free to attend Catholic schools. There are numerous boarding-schools throughout the States with accommodations that are far in excess of the demand.

Probably it is not known and realized that since the establishment of so many Catholic high schools in the cities and larger towns, the attendance at boarding-schools has been greatly reduced. A study published in the *Catholic School Journal* (January, 1932) reveals that there are 854 Catholic high schools in the United States with an enrolment of less than fifty students, and 673 with an enrolment ranging from fifty to one hundred. Many of these schools are boarding-schools which last century housed two and three hundred students. Gladly I feel would their faculties welcome the children of the faithful in Mexico and give them the Christian training that they are to be deprived of. Mexico is so near now in these days of rapid transportation that distance can hardly be thought of as an obstacle.

A TEACHER.

ETYMOLOGY

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editor: Thank you for the nice little review of "The Concise Oxford French Dictionary." Your reviewer remarks that the "editors have not eliminated etymology altogether." Would it not have been more to the point to have stated what I believe to be a fact, that this is the only etymological French-English Dictionary in existence?

J. B. ORRICK.

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Seven Days' Survey

The Church.—The American Catholic Historical Association will meet at Washington, D. C., December 26-29. Among the topics to be discussed are "The Development of Religious Liberty in Colonial America," "Maryland" and the "Spanish Colonies." * * * In a recent statement to the press Mahatma Gandhi said, "I believe that Christ is a historic personage. I also believe that he is the greatest teacher mankind has yet known." * * * François Mauriac's latest novel, "La Fin du Nuit" (The End of Night), is receiving advance publication in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* * * * Eight Catholic guilds of transportation workers, all of which have been organized since the war, formed a national federation, December 2, at a conference in London, presided over by the Most Reverend Edward Myers, Auxiliary Bishop to His Eminence, Cardinal Bourne. * * * A life of Guy de Fontgalland of Paris, who died in 1925 at the age of eleven, has already been translated into 82 languages. There have also been published 96 different biographies of Guy and 6,024 articles about him. Petitions for Guy de Fontgalland's beatification and canonization now bear 400,000 signatures, and 500 well-authenticated interventions have been attributed to him. * * * The governor of the State of Puebla, Mexico, has issued a decree, which would limit the Catholic clergy to one for every 50,000 inhabitants and require the clergy to be over fifty years of age and married. * * * Last year 9,709 persons contributed about $53,000 to the English Converts' Aid Society. Since March of this year the St. Paul's Guild of New York has gained 1,000 members and expended $3,200 to aid those who are in need because of their conversion to Catholicism. * * * His Eminence, Cardinal Verdier, has dedicated in the campanile of the famous Church of Sacré Coeur, Montmartre, Paris, the most modern electric carillon in the world. * * * The lepers of Molokai recently sent $115, contributed from their meager savings, to the National Headquarters of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

The Nation.—In order to secure a $15,000,000 short-term loan necessary for the continuance of relief expenditures, the municipal government of New York City was finally forced to impose a sales tax of 2 percent. Bankers making the loan, thereupon reduced the rate of interest they had been charging the city on emergency relief loans made during recent months by more than a third, from 2¾ percent to 1¾ percent. Retailers reported that the tax was being paid cheerfully and had had no apparent effect of reducing sales. Christmas sales continued to run well ahead of a year ago, in New York as throughout the country. Protesters against the tax asserted that it shifted the tax burden away from the higher income brackets and was the spear-head of a drive by the financially powerful to effect this change generally. * * * In his address to the American Farm Bureau Federation convention, the President pointed out that in spite of the drought, farm income for 1934 "is running about $1,000,000,000 above last year." Hopes for even greater gains next year, he said, could not be justified unless industrial production and imports increased in volume and unless agriculture continued to adjust its production to existing markets. Edward A. O'Neal, president of the federation, called for a stronger Agricultural Adjustment Act and demanded that it be continued so that agriculture might be in a position of equality with industry. * * * The National Association of Manufacturers and the Congress of American Industry closed after adopting the "platform for recovery" reported in these columns last week, with the addition of two new planks. These recommended the extension for one year of a modified NRA and the appointment by the President of a commission to plan a national program for unemployment insurance, old-age pensions and other social security measures. * * * Dr. Virgil Jordan, president of the National Industrial Conference Board, told the convention, "This is the last call for recovery on the basis of private enterprise, and unless it is answered decisively in the next six months, it will be too late." * * * Great Britain announced it would continue to default its commitments on its debt to the United States. France and Italy have also indicated officially that they would fail to meet their commitments. Finland alone made arrangements to pay its instalment.

The Wide World.—Jugoslavia and Hungary were at one another's throats in earnest as the so-called Saar meeting of the Council of the League of Nations was suddenly forced to deal with dynamitic Balkan affairs. Belgrade wanted nothing less than an open declaration that Hungary was guilty of having fomented the assassination of King Alexander; and the situation was complex enough to force Italy and France into restatements of their contrasted policies toward the Little Entente. Many thousands of Hungarian peasants who had settled in Jugoslavia were deported without much ado, and troop movements along the Hungarian boundary caused alarm. Finally, after various efforts to arrange a compromise had failed, the League succeeded in drafting a resolution which both parties to the dispute could accept. Hungary promised to investigate and joined the other powers in deploring the assassinations. * * * The Duc de Guise (Jean III) made a public bid for the throne of France through the royalist press, and outlined the program on which he supposed the nation might stand with him. He stressed the desirability of a "corporative state" and of a firm, consistent foreign policy. * * * Japanese opinion continued to uphold imperialist foreign policy, especially the "pacification" of Asia in accordance with a new "Monroe Doctrine." In general the feeling was that foreign powers failed to realize what Japan was pur-

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posing to do. But nothing, even the obligation to resist force to the point of suicide, would (it was held) restrain the Japanese people from attempting to reach its appointed goal. * * * Great Britain prepared for an armament inquiry of its own as Sir John Simon, bowing to public opinion, removed the caveat which the Foreign Office has placed on this kind of investigation. At the same time two British recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, Sir Arthur Henderson and Sir Norman Angell, were told at Oslo, Norway, that the sole possible method for establishing peace was the grant to Germany of complete equality with other European powers.

* * * *

The Technique of Selling Munitions.—The Senate arms investigation committee resumed its hearings, December 4, and the parade of alarming disclosures has again been making front-page news. As we go to press it is revealed that since 1923 the United States War and Navy Departments have known and approved of the efforts of the Du Ponts to sell to Japan both military powder and machinery for making explosives, justifying themselves on the grounds that this would keep the Military and Naval Intelligence Services informed on Japan's actual offensive and defensive strength. Speaking for the Foreign Policy Association, December 9, William T. Stone summarized the results of the Senate investigation thus far, and explained the association's opposition to the manufacture and sale of instruments of war for private profit. In the first place arms makers have defied or circumvented our national policy by violating arms embargoes and international treaties. They have come to look upon bribery as the accepted thing in securing arms contracts, and have sold arms simultaneously to contending belligerents and both factions in a civil war. They have stimulated armament races between friendly nations; American, British and German munitions makers have made patent and other agreements whereby they may exchange secret processes, divide large areas into sales territories and split the profits. Secret international arms agreements among private arms interests have influenced the foreign policies of governments, and lobbies have opposed restrictions on armaments. Our War and Navy Departments have released military designs to private firms and acted as sales promoters in foreign markets. Finally, present laws and regulations do not enable the United States to prevent the mislabeling of ships bound for foreign countries or to control the shipping of arms to belligerents in violation of embargoes.

Political Choice.—Joseph McGoldrick, at present Controller of the City of New York, has contributed an essay to a series called "Redirecting Education," which the Columbia University Press published December 11. Mr. McGoldrick is an assistant professor at Columbia University who obtained leave of absence to fill his present post in the Fusion administration in New York. Last month he was defeated in the elections by the regular Democratic candidate and at the end of this month he will retire from political office. He believes a sincere reformer has "little chance of success" in American politics, and a voter not much more, because the set-up is "so thoroughly controlled by one or the other of our great party organizations, or the two of them jointly, that the voter has no real freedom of choice. . . . Our politics has come to be a business in itself. It is the business of conducting campaigns with armies of political mercenaries, allotting positions in the administrative service to those of the victorious side, and using the power thus obtained further to intrench the victorious party or faction. . . . There is a belief current in some circles that the solution lies in persuading young men and women to enter politics. As American politics is organized, such a program is sheer folly. Instead, our efforts should be directed toward demobilizing and deflating American politics and restoring it to its amateur standing. . . . Viewing the matter frankly, there is not more reason why an intelligent citizen should feel it necessary to respect out existing political organizations and make a choice between their candidates than there would be for him to feel civic pride in the accomplishments of the Chicago Cubs or the New York Giants."

Scholastic Philosophers Meet.—On December 27 and 28, the American Catholic Philosophical Association will meet in annual conference at De Paul University, Chicago. A varied and important program has been arranged. The opening session will discuss relations between modern philosophy and religious belief, the speakers being Professors Robert F. Pollock, Louis J. A. Mercier, and William P. O'Connor. Round-table discussions led by the Reverend John F. McCormick, S. J., and Bishop James H. Ryan will study more technical problems of mind and research. The principal addresses at the dinner on the night of December 27 will be Dom Francis A. Walsh, president of the association, and Professor Mortimer Adler. Religion viewed philosophically, genetically and psychologically will constitute the theme of another session, with Professor Dennis F. Burns, the Reverend Berard Haile, O. F. M., and Dr. Elizabeth G. Salmon doing the honors. Another series of round-table discussions will consider questions of ethics and pedagogy, under the leadership of Dom Malachy Sullivan and Dr. Charles C. Miltner. Arrangements for attendance at these sessions can be made either at the place of meeting or by addressing the association at the Catholic University, Brookland, D. C. This will be the philosophers' tenth meeting. It promises to be unusually stimulating, profitable and comprehensive.

Aquinas in New York.—Apparently the movement for Catholic extension education—of the informal variety—is gathering momentum. The latest evidence of a desire on the part of the laity to place its feet on the bedrock of Catholic principles is the lecture course on "Thomas Aquinas and the Modern World" to be given at the Centre Association in New York. These twenty Friday evening lectures, beginning December 14, will be given by Father Ignatius Smith, O. P., of the Catholic University, and will be open to both men and women for

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a very modest subscription fee—a much smaller fee, incidentally, than that charged for extension courses at many of the universities. According to the announcement, the lectures will be as free as possible of technicalities and will endeavor to show what Saint Thomas would probably think of many of our gravest current problems if he were living today and applying his brilliant intellect to them. A popular course of this sort has been greatly needed for years. The Centre Association, sponsoring the activity, is therefore using its auditorium at 120 Central Park South to high advantage.

Reno Outclassed?—An investigation by the New York County gained jury is being made of practises of persons who solicit clients here for Mexican lawyers for one-day divorce proceedings in Mexico. Six specific cases have been reported to the District Attorney by the Committee on Unlawful Practises of the Bar Association, with a request for a thorough inquiry. The District Attorney said, prior to appearing before the Grand Jury, that in New York City alone about 100 lawyers and "runners" were operating in violation of state law in soliciting and arranging for Mexican divorces. It was revealed that the fees for the proceedings run from $25 to $750. The so-called divorces are with hardly any exceptions not legally valid here and therefore a farcical expense of money and time, a delusion and a fraud. The Bar Association reported that representatives of the Mexican lawyers have been sending circulars to men and women in New York. One of these circulars was cited to read in part, "If your marriage is not a success, and you want a divorce, come to us. Get a Mexican divorce—it's cheapest. You can stay right here, and get it. Why go to Reno?"

When is a Cure Miraculous?—The Glasgow and West Scotland branch of the Catholic Medical Guild met last month to discuss the topic of miracles. Doctor Thomas Colvin, K. S.G., who opened the discussion, declared that to deny the possibility of miracles was to limit the Omnipotence of the Creator of all the laws of nature. Basing his opinion on forty-two years of diagnosing and treating disease, during which he had often been consulted by theologians for his opinion on a miraculous cure, Doctor Colvin stated that if a cure fulfilled seven specific conditions he would consider it miraculous. The conditions as summarized in the London *Tablet* were as follows: "(1) The cure must be instantaneous; (2) it must be permanent; (3) it must be of a disease with objective signs as well as the symptoms of the patient—it must be seen, or felt, or heard by auscultation, or revealed by X-rays, or chemical analysis, by the physician or surgeon; (4) it must be a cure that cannot be explained by the natural process of healing inherent in every living tissue; (5) it must have been examined immediately before and immediately after the cure has taken place by a physician or surgeon, or credible witness or witnesses; (6) the cure must be such that it could not be paralleled by a similar cure where no question of miracle was raised; and (7) in a cure of a nervous disease there must be objective evidence of an organic lesion so as to exclude purely functional diseases such as 'hysteria.'" After discussing Doctor Colvin's conditions one by one, the large meeting of physicians and surgeons unanimously endorsed all of them.

The War on Crime.—After a campaign which included the much publicized tracking down of John Dillinger, "Pretty-Boy" Floyd and "Baby-Face" Nelson and the sudden federal narcotic drive, which to date has netted over 800 arrests throughout the nation, the government called a crime conference in Washington of 500 prominent delegates—criminologists, judges, lawyers, sociologists and officials. President Roosevelt's opening speech has been referred to elsewhere in this issue. At the December 11 session a number of interesting suggestions were made. Attorney General Cummings recommended the establishment of a crime institute which would include a national training school for expert federal agents. J. Edgar Hoover, chief of the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice, asked that the widows and families of slain federal agents be cared for as are those of soldiers and sailors, and it was indicated that such action would be recommended to Congress. A bill aimed at the regulation of the sale of rifles and pistols was the third Department of Justice recommendation expected to be placed before Congress in the near future. Representatives of the press defended themselves against the charge that newspaper publicity contributed to crime, while film producers pledged themselves to cooperate in combating lawlessness. The creation of "twilight zones" of crime near state borders was proposed as an effective part of the conference's general plan to coordinate federal, state and local law-enforcement agencies.

Ad Jesum per Mariam.—Speaking at the Fordham University celebration of the 350th anniversary of the Prima Primaria Sodality of Our Lady Dr. Ignatius W. Cox, S. J., professor of ethics at Fordham, said: "Never before in the history of the world has the fate of humanity so trembled in the balance. Plan after plan is proposed for the saving of humanity in the present crisis as plan after plan fails. There can be no saving of humanity even in its worldly and temporal aspects save through Christ and through Christ living in the Christian soul. What the world needs today is sanctity; men and women living in and through Christ and in and through whom Christ lives and saves. Such sanctity is born of the motherhood of Mary. From that motherhood of Mary will return to the world a new Christmas joy. Sodalists know the secret of that joy. It is all contained in the Christmas carol of the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good-will.' It is equally contained in the truth that Jesus is Mary's first born; but we are her second born, the brothers and sisters of our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, very God and very man. It is through the motherhood of Mary that Jesus comes to us and through this same motherhood that we come to Jesus. For Mary is 'the mother of fair love and of holy hope, in her is all grace of the way and of the truth, in her is all hope of life and of virtue.'"

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Dr. Dafoe.——Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe, physician to the Dionne quintuplets, arrived in New York, December 9, with his brother, a medical specialist from Ontario, for his first trip south of Buffalo. Received with limousines, police escorts, detectives and immense publicity, he fulfilled all hopes of news readers as the proper doctor for the famous children of Callander, Ontario. Constantly grilled and hampered by reporters and advisers, he managed to do the things New Yorkers would want him to do, with interest and without affectation and with perfect equanimity. He went out to the Statue of Liberty to look at the skyline: "Wonderful. Just about what I thought it would be." He took a subway ride and said, "I think it's very convenient." He went up the Empire State Building and to a night club, visited various hospitals and looked at the whales in the American Museum of Natural History with Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, and he got up at five o'clock in the morning. He insisted, in spite of advisers, upon flying to Washington. When asked by a woman reporter, "Do you think New York mothers spend too much time in night clubs?" he replied, "I don't know anything about that." He spoke in Carnegie Hall and hypnotized the audience telling them about the Dionnes and about the people of his section in general: "Their home life is remarkably pure. They live close to the soil and have not been spoiled by the modern civilization. These people are sturdy, simple, law-abiding folk, loyal to their race and particularly to their faith. Race suicide is non-existent and it is not unusual to find families of fifteen to twenty. They are naturally happy in nature, buoyant in outlook, and live to some extent under a communal system." He closed, speaking about the quintuplets: "It is really a treat to go into the nursery and see such a collection of smiling, healthy babies. When they are wrapped up and ready to be moved to the veranda, one feels that the same baby is being taken out five times."

* * * *

The Revival of Confidence.—Alfred P. Sloan, jr., president of General Motors, spoke in a mood of good cheer to the Illinois Manufacturers' Association on December 11. He observed that "today the magic possibilities of industrial regimentation and the so-called planned economy no longer cast the spell of yesterday—that spell is broken. That is the most important thing that has happened." Mr. Sloan offered specific remedies for recovery: an increase of working hours and productivity; flexibility of wage scales; work councils for labor relationship instead of national organization and the closed shop; replacement of obsolete machinery. As a general formula he proposed the reduction of the real (not necessarily money) costs of goods and services, and the broadest possible spread between labor's income and the cost of living. Mr. Sloan believes "the best wage scale is that which permits the fullest productivity; the maximum number of jobs; the largest total of wage payments. A wage scale lower than that may mean the unjustifiable exploitation of the worker. A level higher than that tends to throttle down the industrial machine—fewer jobs, more unemployment." He spoke definitely about the work week: "We should not further decrease the hours of employment; they should be increased. In so doing we increase the size of the pay envelope and we restore to the American worker a spread of purchasing power above the necessities of life, to enable him to consume more goods and to use more services, thus creating more jobs for the workers."

Individual Incomes.—The Bureau of Internal Revenue reports that in 1933 income tax returns were filed by 3,660,105 persons, and their total net income was $10,845,653,532. In 1932, 3,760,402 individuals reported income of $11,185,499,309. Statistics show that the number in the lower income classes (that is, of course, lower for reported incomes; only 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 of the more wealthy American citizens have incomes high enough to consider reporting), below $25,000 per year, decreased between 1932 and 1933 from 3,735,313 to 3,633,963, and those in the classes above $25,000 per year rose from 25,289 to 26,142. In other words, the total income somewhat fell, and the richest classes grew slightly bigger and more prosperous while the fairly rich groups thinned out and became poorer. Over the year, income from wages, salaries, rents, royalties, stock dividends, taxable interest and several other sources decreased, and that from "business," partnerships and profit from the sale of real estate, stocks and bonds increased. Forty-six persons reported incomes of over $1,000,000 for 1933, as compared with only 20 in 1932 and 513 in 1929. The year 1929 was the all-time high, and except for 1932, 1933 was the lowest since 1921. These figures do not take into consideration income from tax-exempt securities.

Candid Opinions.—What the younger generation are thinking is always interesting as an indication of candid thoughts on the accomplishments of their elders and expectations for the future. A survey of the opinions of 1,000 students selected at random in "nine typical Eastern colleges" which included the College of the City of New York, Catholic University of America, Dartmouth College, New Jersey State Teachers College, Wesleyan University, Mount Holyoke College, Vassar and University of Maryland, by a member of the department of philosophy at Long Island University, indicated considerable cynicism, a Leftward swing, yet several anchor-holds on the Right. Only 13 percent favor Communism and 7 percent want a Hitler; though 49 percent answered "Yes" on the proposition, "Our democracy is a sham," 38 percent "No" and 13 percent were non-committal, and on the proposition "Politics is a tool of wealth," 77 percent voted "Yes," 16 percent "No" and 8 percent were non-committal. That "Socialism would stunt personal initiative" found 44 percent agreeing, 43 percent negative and 14 percent undecided, while 83 percent favored a "much more equal distribution of wealth" than exists in the United States today, 11 percent opposed and 6 percent were on the fence. "Public education is an ally of capitalism" found 29 percent agreeing, 55 percent saying "No" and 16 percent non-committal.

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The Play and Screen

By GRENVILLE VERNON

Sailors of Cattaro

WITH the presentation of this remarkable play the Theatre Union, Incorporated, places itself even more firmly in the position which it won last season through "Peace on Earth" and Stevedore," and wins new recognition as one of the really vital forces today in the American theatre. Starting as a theatre of frank propaganda, the Theatre Union shows in this play by Friedrich Wolf that it can take a longer and perhaps a better balanced outlook; that it is not afraid to display the side of the proletarian ledger which is not Red though it is written in red ink. The author, Herr Wolf, is a German Jew, exiled by Hitler, and it is very probable that his sympathies lie Leftward, but he is too fine an artist and too honest a man to descend to the methods of the true radical propagandist. "Sailors of Cattaro" is a drama of defeat, and even in defeat the mutineers are most of them far from heroic figures. Indeed the one man who measures up to heroic standards is the Captain of the St. George. Cynical though he shows himself at times, his is a cynicism which is amply justified by the actions of his sailors, and he alone never wavers in his judgment and in his attitude. Distinguished alike in manner and in mind, utterly contemptuous of death and of the petty vanities and egotistic personal desires of most of the mutineers, he is the only man on the ship who knows where he is going or why. He is the one really thoroughly sympathetic character of the play, the one man who can both think and act. Perhaps that portion of the opening night's audience which looked upon class struggle with religious enthusiasm was angered by this redoubtable figure, but for those who went to see it without preconceived ideas their salute went to the Captain and not to the mutineers. It would be too much to say that "Sailors of Cattaro" is an attack upon proletarian rule, or that it is a defense of the strong aristocrat. The sailors were, after all, largely in the right. They had been mistreated, they longed for peace, they had suffered in a cause for which they had no interest. The mutiny itself was justified. So far every right-thinking man must have been with them as the play unfolded. But their unfitness for their rôle Herr Wolf points out with no uncertain hand. Their cause was just, but they failed because the human material was unequal to its task.

The play is founded on fact—on the mutiny of the Austrian fleet in the Bay of Cattaro during the first three days of February, 1918. Led by a boatswain, Franz Rasch, they seize the ships and put the officers under arrest. Rasch is appointed commander, but, true liberal that he is, he submits his judgment to a council of sailors. The result is chaos and futility. Each sailor thinks only of himself and his own problems, and the one chance the mutiny has of success is frittered away. The Captain, knowing the weakness of his men, talks common sense to them and subtly weans them away from Rasch. They haul down the red flag, and Rasch and three companions are marched off to execution. The best that their author can do for them is to have three of the sailors who have abandoned Rasch conceal the red flag with the pious hope of "Better luck next time"! The cheers which the waving of the red flag won from the audience at the conclusion of the first act, when the revolt was apparently triumphant, seemed ironic indeed in this pitiful anti-climax. Will and character had once more triumphed over right. The only comfort the believer in world revolution can obtain from "Sailors of Cattaro" is the knowledge that a Lenin or a Stalin would be as contemptuous of the leadership of Rasch as was his Captain. The play is then a human document rather than a work of propaganda, and for that very reason it ought to win a wider sympathy than either of the previous Theatre Union plays.

The production was admirable, and in his evoking of the tortured febrile character of the sailors Irving Gordon proves himself a master director. Mr. Gordon's feeling for movement, for tensity of mood, and his ability to impart it to his actors, is extraordinary. And his actors had been chosen shrewdly for their parts. Tom Powers has done nothing better in his career than his portrayal of the well-meaning and futile Rasch. His is a performance informed with the pathos of inevitable defeat, a man whose burden is too heavy for his shoulders. Splendid performances too are given by Ernest Gann, Charles Thompson, Martin Wolfson and John Boruff, while James McDonald gives an acid portrait of the brutal Lieutenant. I have spoken of the character of the Captain. The best-written part in the play, Frederick Roland measures up to every opportunity, playing with a dignity, a reserve and a force both intellectual and moral which makes it unforgettable. Mr. Roland's is one of the truly memorable impersonations of the season. The settings of Mordecai Gorelik are worthy of the play and the actors. A play, despite its sometimes unnecessary profanity, to be seen by all who love the theatre. (At the Fourteenth Street Theatre.)

The President Vanishes

WALTER WANGER'S first independent production of the season is a film which will undoubtedly be widely popular. It is well directed by William A. Wellman, and it tells an exciting though slightly preposterous story of how the President of the United States keeps the country out of war by staging a fake kidnaping, and thereby turns the sympathy of the people away from his enemies, the Grey Shirts, who are the tools of the munition magnates. The President has himself bound in the headquarters of the Grey Shirts, and of course when he is found there the war fever quickly subsides. This plea for the belief that the end justifies the means, is another example of the strange moral confusion which pervades the movies. As to the performers themselves, they do their parts well, especially Arthur Byron as the President, Charles Grapewin as the cynical Senator Norton, Paul Kelly as Chick Moffat of the Secret Service, Osgood Perkins as the Secretary to the President, Peggy Conklin as the girl, and Janet Beecher as the President's wife. (At the Paramount Theatre.)

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Books

Portraits of the Saints

Stages on the Road, by Sigrid Undset; translated by Arthur G. Chater. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $2.75.

THIS is a daring and a delightful book: daring in its hagiologic realism; delightful in the scope of its contents and in the quality of its writing. The central theme of these historical essays is faith exhibited in the lives of valiant and vigorous personalities of varied times and climes. The glamor and turbulence of the thirteenth century's faith is interpreted through a study of Ramon Lull. Saint Angela Merici, champion of women's activities in the Renaissance, illustrates in her career what Catholicity has done for women from the days of the Early Church. The thrilling adventure of keeping the faith in times of persecution is exemplified in stirring narratives of Robert Southwell and Margaret Clitherow, martyred during the Elizabethan persecution of the Catholics in England. In the last essay, "Reply to a Parish Priest," Sigrid Undset weaves her own experiences of life and mind into the texture of a personal explanation of her acceptance of Catholic faith.

After the essay on Margaret Clitherow, and just before her own "confession," the author introduces a brief letter "To Saint James." In this and frequently in the other papers, a sense of humor, too often absent from her fiction, hurries her along as she explains the advantages of a new prayer to curb the world's malign propensity for gossiping. The remark that "Luther did not like Saint James. But perhaps the feeling would have been mutual, if the two Doctors had met on earth," introduces a summary of Saint James's teaching that exhibits a new insight into the abuses of loquacity at a dithering period of history, when the advice of the third chapter of his epistle was shunned: "The Reformation took gossip into its service . . . actually consecrated a certain type of gossip for religious use. Let us just imagine, for instance, what a quantity of slander was required to induce the people calmly to acquiesce in the suppression of the monasteries and the conversion of their estates into private or crown property."

Reticulated with the theme of faith are topics as constantly interesting as the Reformation, the position of modern women, culture and Christianity, marriage, education, the double standard of morality, and the less usual subject of disease as a factor in determining peculiarities of persecutors of the Church. The fine gifts of a literary artist, who is at heart a historian, have been poured into this book lavishly and quietly.

The essay on Saint Angela Merici, the founder of the Ursulines, gives the reader a familiar introduction to the saint's generation, the world of Alexander Borgia and the Sforzas, of political intrigue and religious apostacy, of catastrophes of nature and sinister disease which spread from one country to another—the noisy life of the Italian Renaissance. To explain the achievements of Saint Angela Sigrid Undset says skilfully: "There has never existed within the Church any prescriptive pre-

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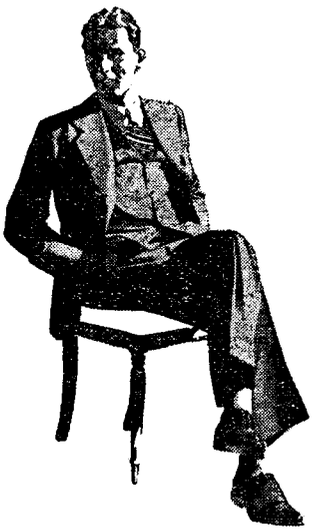

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Next Week

CATHOLICS AND JEWS, by Louis Minsky, examines the evidence for belief that the Jewish people and their rabbis tend toward Communism, regardless of the fact that religion is the first victim of Communism, while Catholics, both laity and the clergy, in what they believe to be the highest interest of their faith, are inclined toward a reactionary advocacy of the old order. In this popular belief he sees the basis of a major calamity, if it were to lead to hostility between Catholics and Jews. "Today the great issue," he says, "is the conflict between religion and all opposing philosophies, which include both Communism and Fascism." . . . MARK TWAIN'S RELIGION, by Cyril Clemens, son of our great colorful, humorous, warm-hearted and realistic American author, scotches the story that has been circulated, sometimes from ignorance and sometimes deliberately, that Mark Twain was atheistic. This false legend has been built up by quoting incidental writings and ignoring the author's masterpieces. Mr. Clemens writes revealingly of the day by day life of his father and quotes from his correspondence. . . . PRESENT-DAY HUNGARY, by Joseph Remenyi, is a timely picture of a land now pivotal in European affairs. The author this summer spent several weeks in the countries surrounding Hungary and in Hungary proper and is familiar both with the region's history and with conditons that do not meet the eye of the casual tourist. . . . ASPECTS OF AUTHORITY, by George N. Shuster, surveys the terrain of the New Deal and points left of it. The danger of a democracy temporarily disillusioned by the leaders of its old free industries, resorting to collectivization, he envisages vividly and reckons the losses that would be sustained by attempted salvation through government. A solidarity and syndicalism the essence of which is liberty, is our hope, he concludes.

judices against women acquiring all the learning they could assimilate. So long as Catholicism was the dominating element in the intellectual life of Europe, such spheres of work as were looked upon as the property of men were not closed to those women who really had the power to accomplish something in them. . . . It was the Catholic Church which provided the basis of respect for an intellectual personality seeking self-expression and a field of activity, whether it were a man or a woman. Where the culture of a country was molded by Lutheranism or Calvinism, the women in the course of a few generations were brought up to be content with existing simply for the sake of the men. So that when the emancipation of women took place in such a country, it was an emancipation from their religious traditions."

The study of Margaret Clitherow, "the first woman to suffer martyrdom under the laws against the adherents of the old Faith" in England, is a tale told simply and touchingly, a remarkable creation of a milieu and a group of characters—her non-Catholic husband, her children, the judges at her trial, the Protestant clergymen who harassed her, and her two boys who became priests. It is not too much to say that the author has written an appealing minor masterpiece, radiant, in spite of its brooding atmosphere of tragedy, with the resistless faith of Mistress Clitherow.

The rich artistic power of Sigrid Undset narrates the familiar story of Robert Southwell, priest, poet and martyr, with a skill that communicates a fresh relish to this brave Jesuit's talents and deeds. Her own poetic feelings interpret with lyric admiration the beauties of Southwell's poetry. The note of mystery and deep religious experience which distinguishes "The Burning Babe" is contrasted with the reflective sweetness and simplicity of his last poems written at the time of his imprisonment. In this essay are to be found blunt references to a pathological "influence which the historians of the last century insisted on ignoring." Dr. C. MacLaurin's medical researches support the safety of her conclusions on "the historical significance of a sinister disease which contributed to determine the mentality of the Renaissance and Reformation: the megalomaniacal, self-worshiping, unrestrained, egocentric tendency in the men of that time was often wholly or in part a consequence of their having syphilis."

American readers will value the curious complexity of Ramon Lull's (Raymond Lully's) career in the eight decades of his unabated enthusiasm for life; first, as a lover and dreaming knight-errant, later as a strenuous scholar, apostle and martyr. His writings inspired in his native land, Majorca, the foundation of a university from which a group of Franciscan Friars came to the shores of California.

In the last "Stage" Sigrid Undset asks readers not "to be scandalized or shocked at what I am going to say." What she says explains clearly and brilliantly her reasons for becoming a Catholic ten years ago. Her plea is for the spread of Catholic ideals of culture, morality and the use of wealth, a plea made absorbing and conclusive by the gallantry of its author's candor and the charm of her

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calmness. A very personal essay, indeed, expressing her understanding of the necessity of revealed religion to uphold civilization against the paganism of divorce, birth control, suicide and marital infidelity.

"Stages on the Road" is a book to be acclaimed. It may indicate the growth of a new and popular Catholic art, the portrayal of the lives of the saints in the form of historical essays, freed from the evangelical fiction type of saintly biography that until recent years plagued generations of intelligent Catholic readers. Her pages present a liberal philosophy of Catholic life as a stimulus to the intellectual, social and religious progress of these troubled times, without in the least deviating from theological intransigence.

It is a pity that Arthur Chater's fluent translation is marred by such careless phrases as "saint-worshiping" or "the worship of saints."

DANIEL S. RANKIN.

New England

Mary Peters, by Mary Ellen Chase. New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50.

MISS CHASE'S "Mary Peters" may be grouped with those novels, fairly numerous recently and quite popular, which deal with settled ways of life in a quiet manner—such books as "The Farm," "As the Earth Turns" and Robert P. Tristram Coffin's "Lost Paradise." Whether the inevitable nostalgia for the lost scenes of childhood or an awareness of the need for radical change in the present social structure explains these books it is hard to say; probably the former has been given added strength by the latter and the farmer's life is made attractive both by its appearance of economic certainty (not necessarily plenty) and the emotional certainty that always attaches to things remote in time. In common with the other novels mentioned, "Mary Peters" bears the thin muslin of nostalgia on its pages, a translucent curtain through which its characters and their actions are seen. The only grounds on which objection could be made to this are personal ones; one may not like the effect, but it is an integral part of the book, it is its "vision," and it gives it its unity.

The figure is not entirely an apt one if it conveys an impression of blurred writing, for Miss Chase is exact in her observations and thoroughly conscious of what she wishes to say; the first section of her book, called "The Sea," evokes a clear picture of the sailing vessel which was the home of the girl, Mary Peters, in the eighties, and if the picture, for all its clearness, remains behind the curtain, it is because that curtain is an essential part of its existence as a thing of memory. The later scenes in the Maine village where Mary Peters passes the rest of her life have the same quality and Miss Chase's sensuous perception makes her a most able necromancer, but these scenes are not unique in the manner of those on shipboard: "The Sea," one feels, is without parallel, not either by reason of extravagance or excellence but because it is a successful crystallization of personal experience.

Another feature contributes to the less particular nature of the remaining sections: the action in them is ap-

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proached from the standpoint of a number of characters, so that it naturally takes on a various complexion from their different personalities. With the exception of Mary Peters, Miss Chase has not striven for any complexity in her people; and this, recalling the tone of the book as a whole, is no defect, since characters obtrusive in their individuality would destroy the book's unity. The book is not so interested in portraying the reactions of certain persons to life as it is interested in conveying to the reader the savor and tang of a certain mode of life; in a sense, the characters are only lay figures, required to move and feel in a human fashion in order to make plain something larger than themselves. There is no conflict between this and the highly personal atmosphere of "The Sea" because that section deals with childhood, when the world and the observer are not to be distinguished—a child's world that was not a personal one would not be credible. It is Miss Chase's triumph that she has re-created a larger world than that of childhood; the established life of a Maine sea coast village moves through a routine dictated by the cycle of the seasons and its slow corruption is shown as the village loses its autonomy, won from seafaring, and becomes a summer outpost of New York and Boston. But, though the outward forms pass, Mary Peters knows she has got something incorruptible from the life she has lived and is content to think this: "Earth was still the ancient lifegiver, and the broad-backed sea the dispenser of many gifts."

GEOFFREY STONE.

Chaucer Translated

Canterbury Tales, by Geoffrey Chaucer; rendered into modern English by J. U. Nicolson. New York: Covici-Friede. $3.75.

I WAS IMPRESSED by seeing in the *Publishers' Weekly* a quotation by Covici-Friede from a letter from Brentano's book store in Washington to the effect, "I think you have in the 'Canterbury Tales' the finest piece of merchandise we have been offered this year," and another from Mr. A. Kroch of the large and well-known Chicago bookstore that bears his name, to the effect, "I am convinced that it is going to be *the* Christmas book." These are competent and pertinent comments on a volume the literary quality of which, in the original, has been appreciated for 500 years. It seemed to me interesting that Chaucer after all this time was to have such popular appeal.

The present book is a lot for the money in paper, binding and format. The illustrations by Rockwell Kent, however, add little if anything. Kent simply is not sympathetic to Chaucer (in fact, one might judge that he has never bothered to read the book). The marvelously mellow and complete humanitarianism of Chaucer, Kent misses stupidly in wooden and repulsive, misanthropic pictures better suited for illustrating Voltaire.

Mr. Nicolson, who rendered Chaucer's old English into modern, succeeds much better. As Professor Gordon Hall Gerould says in the introduction: "His work has the merit of faithfulness; he has added less and subtracted less than most of his predecessors, having chosen wisely to

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translate instead of paraphrasing. . . . Mr. Nicolson's translation has great virtue in that it can be read. His verse moves with spirit and often catches the subtle essence of the original."

Even the student, possibly, who has acquired an accurate knowledge of Chaucer's original, might profit by and enjoy reading the tales easily, as they were intended to be read, without philological distractions; although, of course, the original is the thing. Anyone contemplating giving the book as a present should be warned (in case he is not familiar with the tales) that there is much scandalous and brutal frankness in them. Certainly it is not a book for anyone not at least of college age, in spite of the truly complete picture that it draws wherein the vanities and corruptions of the world are offset by noble spirituality, authentic, working Christianity and the most amiable common sense.

FREDERIC THOMPSON.

Struggle

The Cold Journey, by Graze Zaring Stone. New York: William Morrow and Company. $2.50.

NOVEL readers accustomed to following the fortunes of generations of Alards and Forsytes, or making tours of certain English small towns, may wonder at the facility with which Grace Zaring Stone turns for her subjects from colonial Spanish West Indies to modern, war-torn China and then to Washington society of today. "The Cold Journey" goes back to a French-Indian raid on the English colonial outpost of Deerfield, Massachusetts. Yet all her novels deal with the impact of contrasting cultures and where this element is most marked, as in "The Bitter Tea of General Yen," Mrs. Stone is most successful.

In her latest novel the inability to understand another culture is most evident in the high-principled Puritan minister, Mr. Chapman, and his relations with Father Julien, a missionary who had fallen in with the party of captors who were taking their prisoners over the long, cold trail to Quebec after the success of the raid. Father Julien had all but attained his goal of martyrdom among the Indians, but he became so attached to Mercy, the little English child whose life he had saved and whom he had baptized and instructed, that all his heroic efforts at self-conquest were hardly enough to bring him to part with her. After the lovable little Jesuit missionary had died, Mr. Chapman went to pay his last respects and saw that at one time Father Julien's toes had been hacked off "slowly perhaps with shells." Mr. Chapman "turned away. . . . He wanted never to think of him again."

With two or three outstanding exceptions Mrs. Stone portrays the lust and cruelty of those pioneers and savages with restraint. Her most symbolic figure, Abigail Peckworth, saves the son she has just brought into the world from a burning home, survives the rigors of the ensuing journey to Canada, and finally, with her child, rejoins her husband after crushing with a heavy stone the skulls of her two kindly but determined Indian captors.

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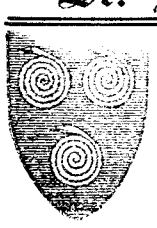
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Leaders and Leadership, by Emory S. Bogardus. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company. $3.00.

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